



Cottin, Marie (Ristean)

"DANGEROUS FRIENDSHIP;

E. Woodcock
OR
E. Woodcock
THE LETTERS

OF

CLARA D'ALBE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY A LADY OF BALTIMORE.

Ann Anderson

Baltimore:

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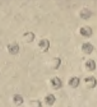
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ERRATA.

- Page, 4, Preface, for will, read, *would*,
30, for assume, read *resume*.
37, read, *he told me*, and
44, for ear, read, *fear*.
68, for spirit, read, *spirits*.
87, for another cause, read, *any other*.
173, for hearing, read *bearing*.
188, for and returning quick, read, *tremble ; return-
ing quick*.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Disgust, danger, and apprehension of the world, having compelled me to seek enjoyment in an ideal existence, I had already traced out a vast plan, which would for a long time have occupied my thoughts ; when an unforeseen circumstance snatched me from my solitude, and my new acquired friends, to transport me to the banks of the Seine, in the environs of Rouen, and place me in the midst of a delightful country, and a large circle of society.

I knew it was not then that I could pursue my labours, and therefore I left all behind me. . . . I did not even take that which I had already done. However, the beauty of the dwelling, the powerful charm of rural scenery, awakened my imagination, and touched my heart ; I wanted only a hint to trace another plan ; this hint was given by a lady of this society, who had herself acted an important part in the history I am about to relate. I asked her permission to write down her recital ; she granted it ;

I obtained that of giving it to the world also, and I hasten to avail myself of it. I *hasten*, is the word, because having written it all from a single sketch, and in less than fifteen days, I have neither taken the time nor the trouble to retouch it. I know that to the public, the time it may have employed is of no concern, and besides, they will do well to complain if they find it tiresome ; but since it would fatigue me much more to correct it, I think I am right to leave it as it is.

For my own part, I am so conscious of its deficiencies, that I neither expect my age, nor sex, will shelter me from criticism, and my self-love will, I acknowledge, be but ill at ease, if I had not a persuasion, that the history I meditate writing, would, perhaps, compensate me for the anecdote that here escapes me.

CLARA D'ALBE.

LETTER I.

CLARA D'ALBE TO ELIZA DE BIRE.

NO, my Eliza, no, you do not doubt the pain that I felt in leaving you ; you saw it ; it was such that M. d'Albe proposed that I should remain with you, and I was on the point of consenting ; but then, would not the charm of our friendship have been destroyed ? Could we have been pleased at being together, in no longer being pleased with ourselves ? Would you have ventured to have spoken to me of virtue, without fearing to make me blush, and to perform duties which would have been a tacit reproach to her, who had abandoned a husband, and separated a father from his children ? Eliza, my duty commanded me to leave you, and I cannot repent it ; if it was a sacrifice, the gratitude of my husband has been its reward ; and the seven years that I passed in the

world since my marriage, had not obtained for me as much confidence on his part, as the certainty that I do not prefer you to him; you know, Eliza, that since my union with M. d'Albe, he has been jealous only of my friendship for you; it was essential to reassure him on this point, and in this I have perfectly succeeded; Eliza, be angry with me if you will, but in spite of your absence I am happy; yes, I am happy in the entire satisfaction of M. d'Albe. . . . At length, said he to me this morning, I have obtained the most perfect conviction of your attachment; much time, without doubt, I have required; but can this astonish you? and will not the disproportion of our ages dispose you to indulgence for my scepticism? You are beautiful and charming; I have beheld you in the vortex of the world and its pleasures, sought after, idolised, with too much prudence for any to dare to declare their wishes to you; with too much simplicity to be flattered by their adulations; your mind has not been awakened to coquetry, nor your heart to love, and I have always discovered in you the desire of gliding thro' the world, without attracting observation; this was

your first trial, with principles such as yours, it was not the most difficult. But I restored you to your friend, I gave you the hope of living continually with her ; already your plans were formed ; your children seem to belong equally to you both ; the care of their education doubles its charm in employing you together ; and it is from the bosom of such enjoyment that I snatch you, to lead you to solitude and a distant abode. You are here at twenty-two years of age, with no companion but two children who are yet in their infancy, and a husband of sixty ; and yet, I find you always the same, always tender, always attentive ; you are the first to remark the beauties of this place ; you seek to enjoy what I give you, that I may forget that of which I deprive you ; but the unequalled, the inestimable merit of your complaisance, is in being so natural and unaffected, that I do not know whether the place I prefer myself, is not always that which pleases you most. This was my second trial ; after this I have no more to make ; I was, perhaps, born suspicious ; and in your charms, you have all that could encrease this disposition ; but happily for us both,

your virtues are still greater than your charms, and my confidence shall be henceforth as boundless as your merits. . . . My friend, replied I, your praises at once touch and delight me ; they assure me you are happy because happiness sees every thing in its brilliant colours ; you paint me as perfect, and my heart rejoices in the illusion, since you love me as such : but, added I, smiling, do not attribute to what you call my complaisance, all the honor of my gaiety : you have not forgotten that Eliza promised to come and join us, since we could not remain with her, and this hope is not the least enlivening picture that embellishes this dwelling. . . . And, my Eliza, you will not forget this promise, so necessary to us both ; you will avail yourself of your independence, not to suffer those to remain separated, whom Heaven had created to be together ; you will come and restore to my heart the dearest portion of itself ; we shall regain those precious moments, whose fugitive existence has left such profound traces on my memory ; we will resume those endless conversations, which mutual friendship renders so momentary ; we will rejoice in this rare and

precious sentiment, which extinguishes rivalry, and excites emulation ; in short, the happy moment in which I shall embrace you, will be that in which I shall be permitted to say, *it is forever* ; and may the tutelary genius which presided at our birth, and produced us both at the same instant, put the last seal to his beneficence in terminating our existence together !!

LETTER II.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

I have been wrong, indeed, my friend, not to have said a word to you about the asylum which will very soon be yours, and which indeed, in itself merits description ; but when I take up my pen, I can think only of you, and you will perhaps pardon an inattention, of which my friendship for you is the cause.

The residence which we occupy, is situated some leagues from Tours, in the midst of a happy diversity of hill and valley, the one covered with wood and vines, and the other with golden harvests, and smiling villas ; the river Cher winds through the country, and empties its waters at a distance, in the Loire ; the banks of the Cher, covered with groves and meadows, are rural and charming ; those of the Loire more majestic, shaded with tall poplars, thick woods and rich pasturage ; from the summit of a picturesque rock, which rises above the castle, these

rivers are seen rolling their waves, sparkling with the reflection of the sun beams, for many a league, and uniting at the foot of the castle ; verdant isles, raising their green heads from the river's bed ; a great number of streams widening them in their course ; on every side, the eye discovers a vast extent of rich soil, covered with fruits, enamelled with flowers, and enlivened by the troops which graze in the pastures. The husbandman tracing his furrows, the carriages driving along the great road, the boats gliding through the rivers, and the towns, villages and hamlets crowned with steeples, all together display the most magnificent prospect.

The castle is vast and convenient, the buildings belonging to the manufactures, which M. d'Albe has just established, are immense. I have appropriated one wing to my use, in order to establish an hospital, in which the sick labourers and poor peasants may find an asylum ; I have already appointed a surgeon and two nurses ; and, as for the superintendence, I reserve that to myself ; because it is, perhaps, more necessary than we are

aware, to impose upon ourselves the obligation of being every day useful to our fellow creatures ; this keeps us in action, and even to do well, we very often require a stimulus to urge us to exertion.

You know that this immense possession has belonged, time immemorial, to the family of M. d'Albe ; it was here that in his youth, he became acquainted with my father, and formed an intimacy with him ; it was here, that enchanted with a friendship, which had rendered them both so happy, they vowed to finish their days, and deposite their ashes ; it is here, in short, Oh ! my Eliza, that sleep the remains of the best of fathers ; his sacred urn reposes under the shade of the poplars and the cypress ; a large rivulet surrounds his tomb, and forms, as it were, a little isle, which no unhallowed footstep must approach : how much delight I take in conversing of him with M. d'Albe ; how much our hearts are in unison on such a subject ! . . . The last kindness of your father, said my husband, was to unite me to you ; judge, then, how I must cherish his memory And I, Eliza, in reflecting on the

world, and the men whom I have known, ought not I also, to bless my father, for having chosen me so worthy a husband ?

Adolphus is much more amused here than with you ; every thing is new to him ; and he finds the continual bustle of the workmen, much gayer than the tête-a-tête of two friends : he never leaves his father, who indulges him to excess ; but what matter, if this extreme complaisance renders him froward and self-willed in his youth ; am I not sure that his example will render him benevolent and just, in his riper years.

Laura does not enjoy, like her brother, every thing that surrounds her ; she distinguishes only her mother, and even this gleam of intelligence they would deny her ; M. d'Albe assures me, that she does not know me from her nurse, and I don't want to put her to the proof, for fear of finding that he is right.

M. d'Albe sets off to-morrow ; he is going to

meet a young relative of his, whom he expects from Dauphiny ; united to his mother by the ties of blood, he promised on her death-bed, to be a guardian and a father to her son ; and you know how true my husband is to his engagements ; besides, he intends placing him at the head of his manufactory, and thereby to relieve himself from the continual fatigue of its superintendance ; but for this reason, I do not know whether I should see the arrival of Frederic with pleasure ; in the world an additional guest is of no importance ; in solitude it is an event.

LETTER III.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

I am alone, it is true, my Eliza, but I am not solitary ; I find occupation enough with my children, and amusement in my walks, to occupy all my time : besides, as M. d'Albe is to meet his cousin in Lyons, he will be here in less than ten days ; and then how can I feel myself alone, when every day I see the earth embellished with some new charm ? Already the first born of nature advances, already I feel its softening influence ; my blood rushes to my heart, which beats more violently at the approach of spring. At this new creation every thing is animated and awakened ; desire is produced, overruns the universe, and excites every being by its magic touch....all are struck at his approach ; he opens the way to pleasure, and they hasten into the enchanting path. Man alone, differing in this point from all breathing Nature, yields only to his influence when guided by love. Love is the passion that constitutes his bliss ; it is love

good that happens within ten leagues around him ; and the consciousness of this renovates his youth. Ah, my friend ! had the world as much attraction for me as it inspires me with aversion, I should yet remain here ; for a wife who loves her husband, counts the days on which she has pleasure as ordinary days, but those on which she gives it to her husband, as days of rejoicing.

LETTER IV.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

I have passed several days without writing to you, my beloved friend, and at the moment I was about to take up my pen, M. d'Albe arrived with his relation. He met him a great way on this side of Lyons ; it was for this reason they returned so much sooner than I expected. I have yet only embraced my husband, and caught a glimpse of Frederick. His air is noble, and his countenance open ; he is timid, but not embarrassed. I received him with as much affability as possible, as much to encourage him, as to please my husband. But M. d'Albe calls me, and I hasten to join him, that he may not reproach me, that even at the instant of his arrival, my first thought is of you. Adieu, dear friend.

LETTER V.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

How much I love my husband, Eliza! How much am I touched with the pleasure he takes in doing good: all his ambition is to undertake laudable actions, as all his happiness is to succeed in them. He loves Frederick tenderly, because he sees in him, an object to render happy. This young man it is true, is very interesting. He has always inhabited the Cevennes, and his abode in the mountains has given as much agility and flexibility to his body, as originality to his mind and candour to his disposition. He is perfectly ignorant of all etiquette; if we are at a door and he is in a hurry, he goes in first; at table, if he is hungry, he takes what he wants, without waiting to be invited. He freely enquires every thing he wishes to know, and his questions would be often even indiscreet, if it were not evident that he asks them, because he does not know that every thing may not be spoken of. For my part, I love this novel character, that shews itself

without restraint or disguise ; this blunt frankness, which often makes him fail in politeness, but never in complaisance, because the comfort of others is necessary to his own. In viewing in him so perfect a desire to oblige all around him, and so lively a gratitude towards my husband, I smile at his simplicity, and I am affected at the goodness of his heart. I never before saw a countenance so expressive ; his slightest sensations are painted in it as in a mirror. I am sure he is yet ignorant that men know how to deceive. Poor young man ! If he were cast thus into the world, at the age of nineteen, without a guide, without a friend ; with his disposition to believe every thing, and utter all his thoughts, what would become of him ? My husband without doubt, will serve him as a support ; but do you know what M. d'Albe almost exacts that I should be his guide also ? I am too hasty, said he to me this morning, and the goodness of my heart does not always compensate for the roughness of my manner. Frederick will require advice. A woman knows better how to give it ; and besides, your age authorises you to direct him :....three

years between you are a great deal ; and further you are mistress of a family, and this title inspires respect. I promised my husband to do as he wished ; so, Eliza, here am I, set up as a grave preceptress, to a young man of nineteen ! Are you not quite astonished at my new dignity ? But to return to things a little more at my level, I will tell you that my little gypsey begun yesterday to walk. She stood alone for some minutes ; I was proud of her movements, and felt as if I had created them. As for Adolphus, he is always with the workmen ; he examines the implements, is satisfied only when he understands them, sometimes imitates, but still oftener breaks them, jumps on his father's neck when he begins to scold him, and makes himself the delight of all, in putting every one in a passion. He pleases Frederick very much, but my daughter is not so fortunate. I asked him to day if she was not charming, and if he did not take pleasure in kissing her soft and delicate skin ; no, replied he, with a great deal of simplicity, she is very ugly, and smells of *sour milk*.

Adieu, my Eliza, I rely upon your friendship, for hastening those happy days we are to pass together. I know that the condition of a widow, who has the interest of her children to consult, demands a great many sacrifices ; but if the pleasure of our reunion is an incentive to your industry, it must necessarily accelerate your affairs. My angel, said M. d'Albe to me to day, if the establishment of the manufactory, and the instruction of Frederick, did not imperiously demand my stay here, I should quit wife and children for three months, to go and dispatch Eliza's affairs, that I might bring her back to you three months sooner. Excellent man ! he finds happiness only in that which he procures to others, and I feel that his example renders me every day better.

LETTER VI.

ELIZA TO CLARA.

This morning as we were at breakfast, Frederick came to us quite out of breath. He had been playing with my son ; but suddenly assuming a grave aspect, he entreated my husband to give him the first lessons to-day, in the employment he designs for him in the manufactory. This quick transition from childishness to reason, appeared so droll to me, that it made me laugh immoderately. Frederick looked at me with surprise...my Cousin, said he, if I am wrong reprove me, but it is not right to make a jest of me. Frederick is right, said my husband ; you are too good to be a mocker, Clara ; but your sudden fits of laughter, contrasted with your general character, often make you appear so.....this is your only defect ; but it is a serious one, for it wounds the feelings of others as much as if they really were the objects of your ridicule.....This reproach touched me : I tenderly embraced my husband, assuring him that he should not twice have

occasion to speak to me of a fault, which gave him pain ; he pressed me to his bosom ; I saw tears in Frederick's eyes ; and this touched me. I held out my hand to him, at the same time, begging him to forgive me ; he seized it with ardour, he kissed it and I felt his tears.....indeed, Eliza, this was not a movement of politeness,.....M. d'Albe smiled....Poor child, said he to me, how can we resist loving him, he is so ingenuous and so unaffected !.. Come, my Clara, to seal your peace, go and take a walk with him towards those forests, which rise above the Loire. He will there find some of his native scenes. Besides, he ought to be acquainted with the place he is to inhabit. As for to-day, I have letters to write.....to-morrow, young man, we will go to work.

I set off with my children. Frederick carried my daughter, altho' she does smell of *sour milk*. When we reached the forest, we began to converse.... To converse is not the word, for he talked alone..the objects he saw, in recalling to him his country, inspired him with enthusiasm. I was

surprised that sublime ideas should be so familiar to him, and at the eloquence with which he expressed them ; it seemed as if he were elevated with them. I had never yet seen so much animation in his eye. Presently recurring to other subjects, I discovered that he possesses solid information, and a singular aptitude to the sciences. I fear that the occupation, which is destined for him, is neither suitable or agreeable to him: an employment merely mechanical, a constant superintendence and dry calculations, must necessarily become insupportable to him, or extinguish the fire of his imagination, which would really be a pity. I think, Eliza, I shall become accustomed to the society of Frederick. His is a novel character, which has not yet been blunted by a commerce with the world. He has all the piquant originality of nature :....we find in him those bold and vigorous touches, with which man must have been formed, when he first came out of the hands of the Creator ; we discover in him those great and noble passions, which without doubt, may lead him astray, but which alone, elevate to glory and

virtue. Far from him are those negative characters without life and without colouring, who know how to act, and to think only as they are led by others, whose delicate eyes are wounded by a contrast, and who in the little sphere in which they move, are not even capable of committing a great fault.

LETTER VII.

ELIZA TO CLARA.

I should have been much surprised, if the well merited praise with which I spoke of Frederick had not drawn on me the reproach of an enthusiast on the part of my judicious friend; for I cannot speak of what I see, nor express what I feel, but her censure immediately puts the *veto* on my judgment. It is possible, my Eliza, that I may yet have seen only the favourable side of Frederick's character; and because I have not been able to discover his defects, I do not pretend to say he is faultless; but I will convince you by the following recital, that there is at least no personal interest in my manner of judging.

Yesterday we were walking at some distance from the house, suddenly Adolphus giddily asked him. . . . My cousin, which do you love best, papa or mama? I assure you, it was without a moments hesitation, that he gave the preference to my

husband. Adolphus wanted to know why? . . . Your mama is a great deal more charming, he replied, but I believe your papa is better....and in my eyes, a single movement of goodness is superior to a thousand graces, . . . Hah ! cousin, you talk just like mama ; she kisses me only once, when I have learned my lesson well ; but when I do any thing to oblige any body, she hugs me to her heart, because she says that is like papa. . . . Frederick looked at me, with an expression impossible to describe ; then laying his hand upon his heart. . . it is singular, said he to himself, but I felt that here. . . . and without adding a word, or making any apology, he left me and returned to the house. At dinner I joked him upon his want of civility, and begged M. d'Albe to scold him, for having so ungallantly left me. Were you afraid ? interrupted Frederick : if you were, you should have told me so, and I would have staid with you....but I thought you were in the habit of walking alone. . . . That is true, replied I, but then your going away, seemed to express, that you were tired of my company....and

this you should not have let me perceive.....You would be wrong to think so, said Frederick I felt on the contrary, an agreeable sensation in listening to you, which, at the same time, gave me pain ; it was for this I left you....M. d'Albe smiled....You love my wife then very much Frederick ? said he ; very much ? no....Would you leave her without regret ?She pleases me, but I believe that in some days, I should forget her....And I, my friend. You, cried he, rising quickly and rushing into his arms....I should never console myself, were I to leave you. You see, Eliza, that I am a very secondary object in the affections of Frederick, and this is as it should be. I could not pardon his loving another as well as his benefactor. But, my friend, I am afraid of wearying you, in talking to you thus continually of this young man, and yet, he appears to me, a subject as new as interesting. I see in him a being fresh from the hands of nature, and consider him with that species of curiosity which a character so novel must excite. His conversation does not shine from borrowed wit....it is rich in its own resources ; it has above all, the rare merit of

proceeding from his lips, such as his heart conceives it. The breast of Frederick, my Eliza, is the abode of truth.

This afternoon we were alone....I held my little girl on my knees, and endeavoured to make her repeat my name. The name of mother, recalled what had passed the day before, and I asked Frederick why he gave that of father to M. d'Albe... Because, replied he, I have lost mine, and his goodness supplies his place....But your mother is dead also; will you not suffer me to become your mother? You! oh, no....Why not? I remember my mother, and what I felt for her, in nothing resembles that with which you inspire me. Because you loved her much more? I loved her quite differently; I was perfectly at my ease with her, and instead of that, your looks sometimes embarrass me; I embraced her too continually....Would you not then embrace me? No; you are a great deal too handsome...Is that a reason? It is at least a difference. I embraced my mother without thinking of her beauty; but in you, I should see it alone,

Perhaps Eliza you will blame me for trifling thus with Frederick ; but in truth I cannot help it. His conversation diverts and inspires me with unusual gaiety. Besides, our playfulness amuses M. d'Albe, and he very often excites it. However, this must not lead you to suppose, that I have set aside my function of moralist : I often give advice to him, to which he listens with docility, and by which he improves ; and I feel that exclusive of the pleasure which it gives M. d'Albe to see me interest myself in his young friend, I shall find a real source of delight myself, in instructing him without destroying his simplicity, and in guiding him through the world, and at the same time preserving the native candour of his character.

No, my Eliza, I shall not go to Paris this winter. Were you there, I perhaps might hesitate ; and in so doing I should be wrong ; for my husband who is devoted to his establishment, could not leave it, without doing it a material injury. Frederick will be a great source of amusement to us during the long winter evenings ; he has a very fine voice

and only wants method to sing delightfully. What a pity, that you cannot be with us. I have given orders for several Italian airs to be sent to me ; if you were here, there is hardly a piece we could not execute, and thus transport our good friend to Elysium

LETTER VIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

It amuses you then, my friend, that I should talk to you of Frederick, and by a species of contradiction, I have nothing to say to you of him to-day ; for several days, I have seen him only at meal times ; and even then he is entirely engaged in talking with M. d'Albe, either of what has been done or is designed for the manufactory. I am even more habitually alone, than before his arrival, because, as M. d'Albe amuses himself very much with him, he feels still less want of my society. During the first three or four days, this rendered me melancholy ; to be with them, I interrupted the general course of my occupations, and hardly knew how to assume them ; I continually felt as if I expected some one, and the habit of having society, made me even lose my relish for my solitary walks. We are in truth, my friend, real machines ; it is enough for us to accustom ourselves to a thing, and it becomes immediately necessary ; and because we had it yesterday, we again seek for

it to-day. I believe there is a disposition to indolence generally implanted in our nature, which is the strongest of our propensities; and if there are not many men virtuous, it proceeds less from indifference towards virtue, than because virtue prompts to action, and we always incline to repose. But how well does it recompence those who have the courage to exert it! If the first attempts towards it are difficult, how well does it compensate the sacrifices it exacts! The more it is exercised, the more easy it becomes; it is like two friends who love each other more, in proportion as they learn to appreciate their mutual merit; there is also an art of rendering it easy, and it is not in Paris this art is to be attained. In the magnificent apartments of our splendid hotels, how difficult is it to conceive the misery that groans in the wretched hovels of the poor! If benevolence raises us from our sofas! how many obstacles return us to them again! In the midst of the crowd of miserable beings who swarm in great cities, how difficult is it to distinguish the knave from the unfortunate? we begin by trusting to the countenance; but very soon aware of the fallibili-

ty of this criterion, because tears have once deceived us, we conclude that we must no longer put faith in any. How many steps must be taken, how many inquiries made before we are assured that it is the truly wretched whom we are relieving! In seeing the endless number of the miserable, how wounding is it to the soul, to be able to succour only so small a proportion? And notwithstanding all the good we may have done, the idea of that which was beyond our power, disturbs our tranquility. But in the country, where those who surround us are fewer and more approached to us, we neither risk being deceived, nor are obliged to restrain our benevolence; if its object is less extensive, we have at least the hopes of attaining it. Ah! if every one would thus interest themselves in embellishing their little horizon, misery would very soon disappear from the earth; inequality of fortune would cease, without shock or effort, and charity would be the celestial tie which would unite men to one another.

LETTER IX.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

You know M. d'Albe's taste for political news. Frederick participates in it. A subject which embraces the welfare of whole nations, appears to him the most interesting of any : every evening as soon as the journals and newspapers arrive, M. d'Albe hastens to call his young friend, to read and discuss them with him. As this employment almost always occupies an hour, I generally avail myself of the opportunity of retiring to my chamber, either to write to you, or amuse myself with my children. During the first two or three days, Frederick asked me where I went, and wished me to stay and be present at the reading : at length finding that it was always the signal of my retreat, he reproached me for my indifference to public news, and insisted I was wrong. I told him no ; that that only could be called wrong, from which evil resulted to others ; that therefore I could not reproach myself for the

little interest I felt in political events ; that a feeble atom like me, is lost in the immense crowd of beings who inhabit this wide country, and consequently what could result from the greater or less degree of interest I might feel in its political concerns ? Frederick, the service which a female can render to her country is not in occupying herself with what passes in its government, in offering her advice, but in exerting all the virtues in her power. Clara is right replied M. D'Albe ; a woman in devoting herself to the education of her children, and her domestic cares, in setting the example of correct morals and industry around her, accomplishes the task imposed on her by her country ; if every one would thus content themselves in doing private good, from this multitude of good works, the most admirable consequences would ensue. It is to men that great and vast conceptions belong ; it is theirs to create governments and laws, and the part of women to facilitate their execution, in confining themselves to fulfilling those cares and duties that befit them. Their task is easy ; because whatever may

be the order of things, provided it is founded upon virtue, they are sure of concurring in its duration if they do not leave the circle which nature has traced around them.

Eliza, I am amply rewarded for having done my duty in coming here with M. d'Albe. I am happier than I have ever yet been. I have no longer those moments of sadness and disgust which sometimes rendered you so uneasy. Certainly it was the *great world* that inspired me with that perpetual listlessness, and it is the sight of nature which has renovated me. My friend, nothing is so congenial to my feelings, as to pass my life in the country, in the midst of a numerous family. Besides the air of resemblance that every thing wears to the antient and patriarchal manners, which certainly has its influence, it is here alone we can regain that soft and universal benevolence, which you have sometimes accused me of being without, but which, moving in large circles of society necessarily blunts. When we have

only useful connexions with our fellow creatures; such as the good we may do them, or the services we can render them, a strange face always announces a new pleasure, and the heart expands to bid it welcome; but in the world we are perpetually surrounded with a crowd of idlers, who fatigue us with their uselessness, and very far from teaching us to employ our time to a good purpose, they oblige us to make an ill use of it, and we must, if we do not resemble them, either treat them with coldness or dissimulation; benevolence is thus extinguished in the great world, like hospitality in great cities.

LETTER X.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

This morning I was called at 5 o'clock, to go and see the good old Frances, who was seized with an attack of apoplexy. I ordered the surgeon of the house to be immediately sent for, and we went together to the relief of the poor creature. By degrees the symptoms became less alarming, and her first movement on seeing me near her bed, was to thank heaven for having restored a life, in which her good mistress took an interest. We discovered that one probable cause of the accident was her having neglected a wound in her leg; and as the surgeon hurt her in touching it, I insisted on cleaning it myself. Whilst I was so employed, I heard an exclamation, and raising my head perceived Frederick Frederick in an ecstasy. He had just returned from a walk, and seeing people round the cottage, came in. He had been there for a moment, he told he was contemplating not his cousin, not a woman,

lovely as she was charming, but an angel!—I blushed, both from what he said, and from the expression of his countenance, and, perhaps too, a little from the disorder of my dress; for in my haste to go to Frances, I had only taken time to put on a petticoat, and throw a shawl over my shoulders. I begged Frederick to retire; he obeyed me, and I did not see him again the whole morning. An hour before dinner, as I expected company, I came down stairs very much dressed, because I know it gratifies M. d'Albe; he was particularly pleased with my appearance, and addressing himself to Frederick.....is not that gown very becoming to Clara, my friend...does she not look charming?.... She is only pretty now, replied he, this morning she was celestial. M. d'Albe asked an explanation of these words....Frederick gave it to him, with all the fire of enthusiasm. My young friend, said my husband, when you know my Clara better, you will speak with less astonishment of what she has done to-day; are we surprised at what we continually see? Frederick, behold this woman, adorned

with all the charms of beauty, in the flower of youth, she has retired to the country with a husband who might be her grandfather, occupied only with her children, aiming only at making them happy by her gentleness and her tenderness, and diffusing her active benevolence throughout a whole village ; such is my Clara ; let her be your friend, my son ; talk to her without reserve ; learn from her soul that which will render your own perfect ; she does not love virtue more than I do, but she knows how to render it more captivating. During this conversation, Frederick had fallen into a profound reverie. My husband was called out by a workman, and I remained alone with Frederick. I approached him... What are you thinking of said I ? He started, and taking my two hands within his, whilst he fixed his eyes upon my face, in the first bright morning of youth, said he, as soon as the idea of happiness palpitated in my bosom, I created in my mind the image of a woman, such as was necessary to my heart. This enchanting

chimera, accompanied me continually ; but I found it no where realized ; it is now I recognise it in the picture which your husband has drawn : one only trait is wanting : her whose idea I have pictured to myself, could be happy only with me...what do you say Frederick, exclaimed I...I simply relate my error to you, replied he, with the utmost tranquillity ; I had until now supposed, that only one being like you could exist ; without doubt I was mistaken, for I now feel an ardent desire, of finding another just like you. You see Eliza, that the end of his conversation banished those ideas, to which the commencement had given birth. May I, O my friend be so fortunate as to aid him in the pursuit of her he seeks, her he desires ! she will be happy, most happy, for Frederick will know how to love !

I must then, dear friend, be resigned, to six more long months of absence ! six months, far from you ! how much time lost to happiness ! happiness, that being so fugitive that many believe it to be

a chimera, exists only in the reunion of all the tender sentiments to which the heart is accessible, and in the presence of those who excite them ; a void prevents it from existing ; the absence of a friend destroys it, and indeed, my Eliza, I am not happy, for you are far from me, and never was my heart more sensible of the want of loving, and of enjoying our reciprocal tenderness. I know that if friendship calls, duty detains you ; and I respect you too much to expect to see you : but how ardently do my wishes aspire to that moment, which in blending them together will restore you to our arms ; it would be so delightful to me to weep upon your bosom ; it would relieve my heart of a weight which oppresses it, but which I cannot define! Adieu.

LETTER XI.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

You ask me whether I would have been very glad, that my husband should have heard my last conversation with Frederick? Assuredly, Eliza, there was nothing in it that could give him pain; this is so true, that I related it to him from one end to the other. Perhaps I did not precisely render Frederick's accent; but who could do it? M. d'Albe heard what I recited with more indifference than myself; he saw in it only the proof of a warm imagination, and this added he, is peculiar to the season of youth. My friend, said I to him, I believe that Frederick unites with his ardent imagination, a heart infinitely tender. The contemplation of Nature, the solitude of this habitation, must nurture these dispositions, and hence it would be perhaps necessary to fix his affections. Since you interest yourself in his happiness, do you not think I should do right to invite some young people occa-

sionally to spend some time with me? It is by this means only, he can become acquainted with them, and chuse her who shall be most congenial to him. Excellent Clara, resumed my husband, ever anxious only for the happiness of others even at your own expence, for I am sure that from your taste and the age of your children, the society of young persons can have but few attractions for you: but my angelic friend, I know you too well to deprive you of the pleasure of being useful to my ward; I think too, your observations with regard to him just, and your plan judicious. Let us see; whom will you invite? I mentioned Adele de Raincy; she is sixteen, beautiful and highly accomplished. I will invite her for a month.....I think that this plan as well as my confidence in M. d'Albe, sufficiently replies to the whimsical fears, you discover in your last letter. Do not ask me again, if it is prudent at my age, to bury myself in the country with *this interesting, this charming young man*: to suspect it is an outrage to your friend; it would be to degrade her to exact precautions of her against such a dan-

ger. Where crime exists, Eliza, there can be no fear for Clara, and there are alarms which friendship should blush to have conceived. Eliza, Frederick is the adopted child of my husband, I am the wife of his benefactor : these are things which virtue engraves in letters of fire, on elevated souls, and that are never forgotten. Adieu.

LETTER XII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

It is possible, my Eliza, I may have laid too much stress upon the suspicions you suffered me to perceive ; but they shocked me, and I am not much better pleased with the explanation you give of them. You trembled only for my peace, and not for my conduct, say you ? Ha ! my Eliza, you are wrong ! We can be virtuous only with a pure heart, and every thing may be expected of her who is capable of a criminal passion ; but let us leave this theme, I blush for having dwelt so long on such a subject ; and to prove to you that I do not fear your observations, I am going to talk to you of Frederick, and to relate you a circumstance, which with regard to him, would tend to strengthen your opinion, if you esteemed him so little, as to persist in it.

After dinner, I followed my husband into the manufactory, because he wished to shew me the mo-

del of a piece of mechanism he had invented, and which is to be executed on a large scale. I had not yet seen all the particulars of it, when he was called away by a workman. While he was speaking, a poor old man passed close to me with a tool in his hand and accidentally broke a part of the model.... Frederick who foresaw my husband's anger, darted forward like lightning, snatched the tool out of the old man's hand, and thus appeared to have himself done the injury. M. d'Albe turned round at the noise, and seeing his model broken, flew in a rage and vented the heat of his passion on Frederick. The youth, too ingenuous to justify a fault he had not committed, and too good to accuse another, remained silent, and suffered only from the vexation of his benefactor. Touched even to tears, I approached my husband: my friend, said I to him, how much have you distressed our poor Frederick! We may purchase a model, but never a moment of pain given to those we love. In saying these words, I saw Frederick's eyes fixed on me with such an expression of tenderness, that I could not go on. The old man

came at this moment, and throwing himself at the feet of M. d'Albe....my good master, said he, be angry with me ; the dear Mr. Frederick is not to blame ; it was to save me from your anger, that he threw himself before me when I had broken your machine. These words appeased M. d'Albe ; he raised the old man kindly, and taking Frederick's arm and mine, he led us into the garden. After a moments silence, he pressed Frederick's hand and said to him, my young friend, to offer you apologies for my violence, would only wound you, I therefore shall not speak of it ; but know at least, added he, pointing to me, that it is to the gentleness of this angel I owe, having now but short and rare attacks of passion. When I married Clara, I was subject to such terrible excesses of rage, as estranged both my friends and domestics ; she, without either braving or fearing, always knew how to temper them. When my passion was at its height, she knew how to calm me with a word, to melt me with a single look, and to make me blush for my fault, without ever uttering a reproach. By degrees

the influence of her gentleness extended to me, and it now seldom happens that I give her cause not to love me. Is it not so my Clara? I threw myself into the arms of this excellent man; I bathed his face with my tears; he continued, addressing himself still to Frederick: I believe I am what may be called a benevolent blusterer; these characters seem better than others, because their sudden transition from harshness to good-nature, heightens the effect of the latter; but because it is less striking when equal and permanent, should it therefore be less esteemed? The world however is so unjust, and it is for this reason that my heart has sometimes been thought better than Clara's. I believe I have participated in this injustice, replied Frederick; but I am completely cured of it, and your wife appears to me what is most perfect in the universe..... My son! cried M. d'Albe, may I one day see you united to such another, and pass away my days amidst objects that render them so precious! You must never leave us Frederick. Your society has become indispensable to my comfort. I swear it, O, my fa-

ther, replied the young man vehemently, and putting one knee to the earth, I swear it in the face of that Heaven, which my mouth never yet profaned with an untruth, and in the name of this creature, yet still more celestial....I leave you! Ah God! beyond this dwelling, I feel as if all were death or void.....what a brain, cried my husband! Ah, my Eliza, what a heart!

In the evening, alone with Frederick, I know not how, the conversation turned upon the scene that passed in the manufactory. I suffered for your pain, said I.....I saw it replied he, and from that moment it vanished. How?....Yes, the idea that you suffered for me, had something sweeter in it than pleasure itself; and, when you pronounced my name with such a touching accent.....*poor Frederick*, said you. Clara, those two little words are written on my heart, and I would give all the enjoyments of my whole life, to hear you repeat them once more; it was my father's pain only, that spoiled that delicious moment.

Eliza, I confess I was affected, but what will you conclude from thence ; who knows better than you, how far friendship is removed from being a cold or indifferent sentiment ? Has it not also its emotions, its transports ? but it preserves its characteristic traits, and when mistaken for a more impassioned sensation, it is not the fault of him who feels, but of him who judges it. Frederick is alive to friendship, for the first time in his life, and must necessarily therefore, express it with vivacity. Do you not observe that my image is always united to that of my husband in his heart ? When I see him so tender, so affectionate towards an old man of sixty ; when I recollect the emotions you and I have so often experienced, can I be surprised at his lively friendship for me ? No, my Eliza ! Say, if you will, that he ought to feel nothing for me, but not that what he does feel is what it should not be.

My little Laura begins to run alone ; nothing is more charming than the attention Adolphus pays her ; he leads her, supports her, and carefully re-

moves every thing out of her way, that can hurt her, losing in this interesting occupation, the giddiness natural to his age. Adieu.

LETTER XIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Why, my Eliza, do you embitter the attachment that unites me to Frederick, with your broken words and interrupted phrases? Why are you not present at our conversations? You would then see that our mutual tenderness for M. d'Albe is the tie which unites us most closely, and that the care of his happiness is the cherished subject, which attracts us to each other. I passed the whole morning with Frederick, and during this long tête-a-tête, my husband was almost the sole object of our discourse..... M. d'Albe's birth-day will be in three days; I have had a little theatre prepared in the pavilion on the banks of the river, and I intend having a concert of wind instruments in the poplar wood, where reposes the tomb of my father. I had my harp carried there this morning and was practising the piece I had composed in honour of my husband, when Frederick joined me. He had divined my purpose, and brought me a duo, the words and music of

which he had himself written. After having sung his piece and found it charming, I shewed him mine ; he was pleased with it, and if M. d'Albe is pleased also, never did author receive a sweeter and more flattering recompence. It grew warm ; I wished to return to the house, but Frederick detained me. Seated beside me, he looked at me steadily, too steadily ; this is his only fault, for his look has an expression difficult, I...I had almost said dangerous to support. After a moments silence he began thus :—You will hardly believe that the same subject which has just touched me even to tears, in short, that your union with M. d'Albe, had before I knew you, inspired me with a strong prejudice against you. Accustomed to consider love as the most beautiful attribute of youth, it appeared to me that none but a cold and interested soul, could resolve to form a tie, where the disproportion of age, must necessarily exclude this sentiment. It was not without repugnance I came here, because I figured to myself that I should find in you, an ambitious and deceitful woman, and as I

had heard much of your beauty, I tenderly pitied M. d'Albe, whom I supposed the dupe of your charms. During our journey, he never ceased talking to me of his felicity and your virtues ; I saw so clearly that he was happy, I was obliged to do you justice, but in spite of conviction, my heart rejected a woman, who had vowed to live without love ; and nothing could remove the idea from my mind, that you were reasonable from insensibility, and generous from ostentation. I arrive, I behold you, and all my prejudices vanish ; never was a countenance so touching, never a human voice so harmonious. Your eyes, your accent, your air, every thing about you breathes tenderness, and yet you are happy, M. d'Albe is the constant object of your cares, your soul seems to have created a new sentiment for him ; it is not love, that would be ridiculous ; it is not friendship, for it has neither its respect, nor deference ; you have sought amidst all existing sentiments, what each could offer best calculated to promote the happiness of your husband, and you have formed out of them a whole,

which it belonged but to you to know and practice. O amiable Clara ! I am ignorant of the circumstances which have thrown you in the path you are in, but there is but you in existence who could thus embellish it. . . . He was silent as if waiting for my answer ; I turned round and shewing him my father's urn : beneath this sacred tomb said I, repose the ashes of the best of fathers. I was yet in the cradle when he lost my mother ; then consecrating all his cares to my education, he became at once the gentlest and most amiable preceptor, and the tenderest friend, and inspired my heart with sentiments so lively towards him, that I joined for him, to all the filial tenderness which a father must excite, all the veneration we feel towards a divinity. He was taken from me, as I entered my fourteenth year ; feeling his end approaching, dreading to leave me without support, and esteeming in the whole world only M. d'Albe, he conjured me to unite myself to him before his death. I beleived the sacrifice might preserve him at least a little while ; I made it, and have never yet repent-

ed. O ! my father, thou who readest the heart of thy child ! thou knowest the only wish it forms. May the worthy man to whom thou hast united her never feel a pang of which she will have been the cause, and then her days, will have glided away in happiness. And I too, exclaimed Frederick, in a transport, and I too, my ardent vows are heard ! every day I formed wishes for the happiness of my father, but, what can be required for him who possesses Clara ? Heaven by such a present exhausted its munificence, it has nothing left to bestow. A moment of silence succeeded ; I felt a little embarrassed, my fingers wandering mechanically over the harp, struck some wild notes. . . . Frederick took my hand, and kissing it respectfully, is it true, is it indeed possible, said he, that you consent to be my friend ? my father wishes, he desires it, of all the benefits he has lavished on me, it is that which is most dear ; will you for the first time be less generous than him ? Eliza, dear Eliza, how could I have refused him a sentiment with which my heart is penetrated, and which he so

highly merits ? Oh ! no it was my duty to promise him my friendship, and I did it with fervour ; and who can have a better claim to it than Frederick ? he whose inclinations are always congenial to my own, he who discovers my thoughts before I give them utterance, whose tastes are all in unison with mine, who cherishes and venerates the father of my children ! and thou my Eliza, thou, the well beloved of my heart, when wilt thou come, and by thy presence, bestow on me all that friendship can give of felicity ! this celestial sentiment supplies the place of all those I have renounced ; it animates nature, it breathes every where ; I listen to it in the sounds I repeat, and their vibration finds an echo in my heart. It is it which causes my tears to flow ; it is for it alone, that they shall cease...Friendship ! thou art every thing ! the leaf that flutters, the rose that I gather, the perfume which it exhales ! I will live for thee, and with thee also may I expire.

LETTER XIV.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

If my two last letters reanimated your doubts Cousin, I hope that this will effectually remove them. Adelaide de Raincy has been here only three days, and she has already made a very lively impression on Frederick. I wished that he should not know she was coming, that she might surprise him, and I succeeded. As soon as she arrived, I led her to the pavilion on the banks of the river, I sent for Frederick, he came immediately, but perceiving Adelaide beside me, an exclamation escaped him, the liveliest colour overspread his cheeks ; he approached, however, but with embarrassment, and his timid and enquiring look seemed to say, are you she whom I seek ? Adelaide was about to complete disconcerting him by a wicked look, when I said smiling :—You are surprised Frederick to find me in such company Yes, replied he, I did not know that it was possible to

be so beautiful . . . this flattering compliment, and which in the mouth of Frederick, had so little the air of being one, immediately changed the disposition of Adelaide ; she looked at him obligingly, and made him a sign to sit down beside her ; he quickly obeyed, and began a conversation which resembles very little, or I am much mistaken, those which this young person is accustomed to hear ; and indeed she said very little, but even her silence enchanted Frederick ; it appeared to him a proof of that modesty and timidity, which he admires above all things in a young person. Adelaide, on her side, seemed very much disposed in his favour. The admiration with which she inspires him flatters her, the charm of his conversation attracts her, and the fire of his imagination amuses her. Besides, Frederick's figure is very charming. If he has not what we call *tournure*, he has agility, address and grace, and all this may very well make an impression on a young heart of sixteen. Since a year in which I had not seen Adelaide, she is singularly improved, her eyes are black, lively and brilliant ; her brown

hair falls in ringlets on a neck of dazzling whiteness ; I never saw finer teeth, nor such vermillion lips ; and without being either a lover or a poet, I may say, that the rose, humid with the tears of Aurora, has neither the freshness, nor the lustre of her cheeks ; her complexion is a blossom, her tout-en-semble a grace ; it is impossible on seeing her, not to be struck with admiration, and Frederick I assure you leaves her as little as he can avoid. Does he come into the parlour, it is always at her he looks, it is to her he addresses himself, he has left far behind all my lessons of politeness, and the sentiment with which he is inspired, has taught him more in an hour, than my counsels could in three months ; when we walk, he hastens to offer his arm to Adelaide, to support her if she jumps over a rivulet, to pick up her glove when it falls, because it offers an opportunity of touching her white and delicate hand ! I do not know whether I am mistaken, but it seems to me, Eliza, the glove falls very often.

This morning Adelaide was examining a portrait of Zeuxis which is in the drawing room. It is odd said she, that which ever way I turn, the eyes of Zeuxis are fixed on me.—I believe so, warmly interrupted Frederick; would they not seek the most beautiful?—You see my friend, how promptly the slightest emotion of preference forms a young man, and I hope that henceforth his friendship for me will give you no inquietude; this word friendship is even too strong for that with which I had inspired him, because according to my ideas, love itself should not occasion friendship to be neglected. A single word, yes I am sure a single word from Adelaide would very soon annul the promise so solemnly given, never to quit us. Indeed Eliza, I blame myself for the disposition I had to attach myself to Frederick. When once a fate is fixed, like mine, as no circumstance can change the sentiments we feel, they remain always the same: but he, just at the age when the passions may hurry away, and subjugate him, can we expect a durable sentiment on his part? no, friend-

ship would very soon be sacrificed, and I alone should pay all its tribute, and then alas ! for me, my Eliza, for we know that this sentiment, exacts all it gives. May I see Frederick happy ! but tranquilize yourself my friend, it is not me whom he requires to render him so.

LETTER XV.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

If I have not written to you for a fortnight, my beloved friend, my silence has been occasioned by indisposition. On finishing my last letter I felt oppressed and melancholy without knowing why, and was a very dull companion for the lively and brilliant Adelaide. I put off writing to you every day, because of the weakness which overwhelmed me, and at length a fever seized me. I feared that the derangement of my health would injure my child, and wished to wean her. The physician whilst he acknowledged, that it would be right for the child, objected that it was wrong for me, because at a time when the humours are in motion, the milk might pass into the blood, and be attended with very injurious consequences. My husband warmly supported this advice, I persisted in mine. At length he became angry, and told me he saw clearly I neither cared for his repose, nor his happi-

ness, since I thought my life of so little importance : and that be it as it would, he forbid my weaning her suddenly. I held Laura in my arms, and approaching him, I put her into his :—this child is yours my friend, said I to him, and your rights over her are as great as mine ; but do you forget that in giving her life, we took the engagement of sacrificing ours to her good ? and if we lose her, do you think you could forget having been the cause of her death, and ever console me for it ? in pity then to me, to yourself, remember that in competition with the interests of our children, ours should be as nothing—he gave me my daughter. Clara said he, you are free ; evil be to him who could resist you. I promised M. d’Albe in reward for his condescension, to use all possible precautions, and this I have done ; my health is now a great deal better, and I hope in a few days, it will be perfectly re-established. Adelaide said to me this morning : I see Madame d’Albe, how far I am yet from the possibility of making a good mother ; I was terrified the other day, at the du-

ties you thought imposed on you towards your children; you think you ought to sacrifice your existence to them! I was so surprized when I heard you say so, I was almost tempted to believe you were mad.....mad! cried Frederick...rather say sublime...you will hardly believe it my young friend, interrupted M. d'Albe, but in the world these two words are almost synomynous. You will hear those whose elevated souls disdain to be the copies of the copies, who surround them, accused of eccentricity and taxed with a systematic spirit.

This is very true, my Eliza and this injustice is a consequence of the narrow minds of the world, which in general always prompt people to endeavour to reduce others to their level. But my head is too weak to write more—adieu my beloved friend.

LETTER XVI.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Adelaide wished to go to a ball this evening; Frederick accompanies her, and my husband goes with them to be their mentor; my two friends, wished very much to stay with me, Frederick particularly urged Adelaide to prevent her leaving me. He wished to make her feel that as I was not well, it was not very delicate to leave me alone; but the love of dancing prevailed over all these reasons, and she declared that a ball being her sole passion, nothing could prevent her going; besides added she with a sarcastic smile, you know Madame d'Albe does not like that we should incommode ourselves; and then how can we fear she will be solitary, when we leave her with her children? she dwelt upon the last word, with a sort of irony. Frederick looked at her mournfully. It is true replied he. In this consists her sweetest pleasure, and I see it does not belong to all the

world, to know how to appreciate it. You are right Miss Adelaide, every one should pursue the object most congenial to them ; that of Madame D'Albe is to be adored in fulfilling all her duties ; yours is to dazzle, consequently a ball is your triumph. Adelaide perceived only an eulogium on her beauty in this phrase ; I discovered something very different. I see too clearly, that notwithstanding Adelaide's captivating charms, if her soul is not responsive to her face, she will never fix Frederick. And yet, what may not be hoped for, from her age ? Eliza I will employ all my endeavours, to conceal defects which time may correct. We are invited to another ball in three days ; if I do not go, Adelaide will leave me again, and Frederick will not forgive her. I am therefore determined to go with her, besides it is possible that a dance, and a visit to the beau monde, may divert me from a melancholy which oppresses me, and acquires new power every day. I feel a langour, a sort of disgust, which discolours all the actions of life ; and as if it were not worth the trouble we take to preserve it. I find the fatigue of exertion in every

thing, the pleasure of having acted in nothing. I know that the good we do to others is enjoyment for ourselves, but I say it rather than feel it and if I were not frequently agitated by sudden emotions, I should believe my soul about to be extinguished. I have no longer spirit for this solitude where we must suffice to ourselves. For the first time I feel the want of society, and I regret not having gone to the ball. Adieu, the pen drops from my hands.

LETTER XVII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Adelaide paints in a superiour manner for her age ; she wished to take my picture, and I consented with pleasure, that I might present it to my husband. This morning whilst I was setting, Frederick joined us, he looked at what she had done, praised her talent, though with a half smile which did not escape Adelaide, and of which she asked an explanation. Without listening or replying to her, he continued to look first at the portrait, then at me, then at the portrait, and so on alternately. . . . Adelaide was impatient to know what he thought : at length, after a long silence, that is not Madame d'Albe, said he, you have not succeeded in catching one of her moments...how, cried Adelaide, blushing, what fault do you find with it ? do you not recognize all her features ? I acknowledge said he, that all her features are there, and if you saw only them in looking at her, you ought to be pleased

with your performance....What more would you have there? What would I have? that it should be acknowledged there are faces which art can never render, and that its insufficiency should at least be felt. This beautiful light hair, although touched with taste, yet presents neither the brilliancy, the softness, nor the undulations of hers. On this white and polished skin, I do not see either the delicate down which covers it, or the transparent colour of the blood reflected. This uniform complexion will never recall that, whose colours vary like thought: here is certainly the celestial blue of her eye, but I see only their colour; it was their expression that should have been rendered. This mouth is fresh and voluptuous like hers; but then this eternal smile, I wait in vain, the expression that should follow it. Those noble, graceful and enchanting movements which her slightest gestures display, are enchained and immoveable.....No, no, features without life, can never render Clara; and where I do not discover soul, I cannot recognize her...Well, then, said Adelaide, angrily, paint her

yourself, for my part I shall have nothing more to do with it. Then throwing down her brushes, she got up and went out in an ill humour. Frederick's eyes followed her with a look of surprise ; and then, whilst a sigh escaped him, he said, into what an error was I led, in seeing her so beautiful ! I thought this woman must bear some resemblance to you ; but to my misfortune, my eternal misfortune, I see it alas ! too clearly, you are unique.... I cannot tell you, my Eliza, how much these words afflicted me. Recovering however from my emotion, I hastened to reply to him.... Frederick, said I, beware of forming a precipitate judgement, and suffering yourself to be influenced by prejudices, which might disturb the happiness to which you perhaps are destined ; because Adelaide is not precisely the chimera you have formed to yourself, ought you therefore to shut your eyes to her true merits ? and besides, do you not know how much the character may alter ? do you think that such and such persons who please you now so much because their minds are formed, would have been supportable to

you some years sooner. You are continually making comparisons? but because the bud has not the fragrance of the full blown flower, do you forget that it will one day possess it, and perhaps with a thousand times more sweetness? Frederick rest assured that in her whom you should chuse, in her whose age would be in proportion to your own, you must neither expect perfect qualities, nor exercised virtues; a good understanding and affectionate heart are all you ought to seek; an inclination to do right, all you should desire; although these qualifications might be obscured by slight defects, should you therefore despond? as there are few unclouded mornings, so we rarely see youth without defects, but every day they diminish, above all when guided by a beloved hand. It is to you that will belong this interesting care; it is you who must form the character of her who is destined for you, and this you can only accomplish, in chusing her of an age when the mind is yet ductile. But, O Frederick added I with solemnity, in the name of your repose, beware of lifting your thoughts to any

other ! In pronouncing these words I went out of the room without waiting his reply.

Eliza, I dare not tell you all I fear ; but Frederick's air made me shudder : if it were possible but no, I am assuredly mistaken ; rendered uneasy by your apprehensions, influenced by your suspicions, I already discover the expression of a guilty passion where exists only that of friendship ; but of an ardent and impassioned friendship, such as a young and enthusiastick soul, new to the impression of this sentiment, must feel. I will watch over it with vigilance ; and as for me, O ! my beloved friend, banish your humiliating fears, rely on a heart which to breathe freely must be without reproach, and to which its own approbation is as indispensable as your friendship.

LETTER XVIII.

CLARA, TO ELIZA.

Eliza, how shall I paint to you my agitation, and my despair? it is all over, I can no longer doubt, Frederick loves me. Do you feel all the horror that this word conveys, circumstanced as we are? Unfortunate Frederick! my heart is oppressed, I cannot shed a tear. Oh! God, why was he brought here? I know him my friend, he loves, and it will be for life; he will eternally drag along with him the anguish by which he is devoured, and it is I, who am its cause! Ah! I feel it, there are griefs beyond all human strength to support. How shall I tell you all? how compose my ideas? In the disorder which agitates me, I can remember nothing. Dear, dear Eliza, why are you not here, that I might weep upon your sympathetick bosom!

To day, we had just dined, when my husband

proposed a walk in the meadows that border the Loire. I consented with pleasure, Adelaide with a very bad grace, for she does not like walking ; but no matter, I was not to consult her taste, when the wishes of my husband were in question. I took my son with me, and Frederick accompanied us ; the weather was delightful. The meadows fresh, enamelled with flowers, and covered with numberless flocks, presented a charming landscape ; I contemplated it in silence, gently following the course of the river, when a loud and sudden noise awoke me from my reverie. I turned round ; great God ! a furious bull had escaped, and was running towards us, towards my son ! I precipitated myself before him, and covered Adolphus with my body. My action, my shrieks, alarmed the animal, he turned about and rushed on a poor old man. In short, my husband too, was about to become his victim, if Frederick, with the rapidity of lightning, had not risked his life to preserve him. With a vigorous arm, he seized the animal by the

horns, they struggled for a moment ; this gave the herdsmen time to arrive ; they ran, and very soon subdued the beast ! I now heard the cries of Adelaide and the old man ; I ran towards the latter, his blood flowed from a dreadful wound. I staunched it with my handkerchief, I called to Adelaide to bring me hers ; she sent it by Frederick, declaring she could not bear the sight of blood, and must return immediately to the house.

How ! without having relieved the unfortunate wretch ! said Frederick ? are there not people enough here said she ! for my part I have not strength to support the sight of a wound ; I require some salts to calm the violent agitation I have suffered, and if I stay here a moment longer, I shall faint. Whilst she was talking, the poor old man bemoaned the fate of his wife and children, whom his death would reduce to beggary. Prompted by the desire of consoling this unfortunate family, I begged my husband to go with Adelaide and Adolphus to the house, and to send the surgeon of the hospital im-

mediately to the village to which the old man directed me, and where Frederick and I determined to have him carried. What! do you stay here Mr. Frederick, said Adelaide, with a look of vexation! do I stay, replied he, in a voice that made me tremble.....go Miss Adelaide, added he more gently; go and repose yourself, this in truth is not your place. She went with M. d'Albe. Two herdsmen assisted us to make a litter, they placed the poor old man on it, and we conducted him to his cottage three miles from thence. Ah! my Eliza, what a spectacle did this weeping family present; what piercing cries did they not utter, on seeing a husband, a father in such a condition! I pressed the unfortunate creatures to my bosom; I mingled my tears with theirs; I promised them relief and protection, and my efforts succeeded in calming their affliction. The surgeon arrived in about an hour; he dressed the wound, and assured us it was not mortal. I begged him to pass the night with the sufferer, and promised to return and visit them the next day. Then, as it began to grow

dark, and I feared my husband might be uneasy, Frederick and I left these good people, loaded with their benedictions.

With my heart full of the emotions I had experienced, I walked on, silently ruminating on the heroic courage with which Frederick had almost risked certain death to save his father's life ; I cast my eyes upon him. The moon beams gently illumined his face ; I saw it bathed in tears. I approached him, my arm leant upon his, he pressed it with violence to his heart, and this movement, made mine palpitate. ' Clara, Clara, said he, in a smothered voice ; why cannot I pay with my whole life, the prolongation of such a moment. I feel there, against my heart, she who engrosses it entirely ; I see her : I press her : in fact, I was almost in his arms, tell me, cried he, in a sort of delirium, if you are not an angel that we must adore, and that heaven has lent for some moments to the earth ; if you are really a human being, tell me why you alone have received that soul, that expression that depicts it, that ex-

cess of charms and of virtues, which render you the object of my idolatry? Clara, I am ignorant whether I offend you, but as my life has passed into your veins, and I exist no longer but by your will, if I am guilty, say to me: Frederick die, and you will see me expire at your feet. He had in fact fallen at my feet; his forehead was burning; his look distracted. No, I can never describe what I felt; pity, emotion, the image of love, in short, such as I perhaps was destined to feel it, all this rushed into my heart! I supported myself with difficulty, and leaning against the trunk of an old tree:—Frederick said I, dear Frederick, recover yourself, resume your reason; would you afflict your friend; he raised his head, he rested it upon my knees: Eliza, I believe I pressed it, for he immediately exclaimed: O Clara! let me again feel that adored hand which approaches me to thy bosom, which carries madness into mine. In saying this he caught me in his arms, my head fell upon his shoulder, a deluge of tears was my reply, the condition of the wretched youth inspired me

with the liveliest pity !.. Ah ! when we know ourselves to be the cause of such anguish, and that it is a friend who suffers, say Eliza, may not the weakness I betrayed be pardonable ? I was so near him I felt the impression of his lips, which gathered my tears. I trembled at this sensation, and repulsing Frederick with violence : Wretch ! cried I, do you forget that your benefactor, your father, is the husband of her, whom you dare to love ? would you act the part of a traitor ! O Frederick, reflect, recover your senses, my friend—treachery cannot live in that noble bosom When suddenly raising himself, he fixed his eyes on me with a look of horror,—what hast thou said ? Ah ! what hast thou said, inconceivable Clara ? I had forgotten the universe at your feet—but your words like a bolt of thunder, shew me at once my duty and my crime. Adieu, I must fly you forever. Adieu, this is the last moment that will see us together. Clara, Clara, adieu He left me. Alarmed at his purpose, I called him in a voice of terrour ; he heard me and returned. Listen to me, said I, the worthy

man whose confidence you have abused, is ignorant of your fault ; if he suspected it, his repose would be destroyed forever ; Frederick you have only one method of repairing it ; it is in extinguishing the sentiment which offends him. If you fly, what will he think ? that you are perfidious and ungrateful. You, his adopted child ! no, no, we must be silent, in short we must dissemble ; it is a dreadful punishment, but it belongs to the guilty to suffer, he must expiate his crime in bearing alone all its pressure. . . . Frederick did not reply, he seemed petrified ; suddenly we heard the noise of horses ; and I perceived the carriage which M. d'Albe had sent to meet me. Frederick, cried I, here are persons approaching, if virtue still lives in your heart, if the repose of your father is dear to you, if you attach any value to my esteem, neither your words nor your manner will betray your error. . . . He did not answer ; still immoveable, he looked as if life had abandoned him ; the carriage was coming rapidly towards us, I had but a moment left, already I heard my husband's voice. Ap-

proaching Frederick :— speak, cried I, do you want to destroy me ? He shuddered Clara, replied he, you wish it ; you command, and shall be obeyed ; at least you can judge of your power over me. As he uttered these words, the servants recognised me, and stopped the carriage : my husband alighted, I was extremely uneasy, my friends, said he ; you have staid a long time, if benevolence were not your excuse, I should not pardon you for having forgotten that I waited for you. Do you feel, Eliza, the agony that this reproach conveyed ! As for me, it struck me speechless ; but Frederick ! O love, what then is thy magic power ! Frederick, the frank, the open, the ingenuous Frederick, to whom until this moment, disguise had been a stranger ; changed in an instant ; a word, a command, produced this miracle ! he replied with a tranquil countenance : you are right my father, we have been wrong, but it shall be for the last time, I swear to you ; it was I alone who was led away by the force of my feelings, your wife did not forget you. You boast, Frederick, said M. d'Albe ; I

know Clara's feelings too well on this subject, they were as much hurried away as your own ; and if she thought of me sooner, it was only because my claims upon her were greater ; is it not so my good Clara ? Eliza, I could not answer ; never, no never did I so suffer : can I then be guilty ! We got into the carriage and when we arrived, I asked permission to retire ; ah, I did not feign, when I said I required repose ! say Eliza, say, why I should bear the punishment of a fault, in which I do not participate ? When I exacted of Frederick to conceal the truth, I did not know what it cost to disguise it. I dread the eye of my husband, of this friend whom I love, and whom my heart has never betrayed ; because Heaven is my witness, that it is friendship alone which interests me in the fate of Frederick. I fear his questioning me, and discovering all ; the idea of his conceiving the smallest suspicion, makes me tremble ; the whole happiness of his life would be destroyed ; Frederick must be sent away ; Frederick, whose mind, and whose society, diffuses so many

charms over his existence ; he must cease to love
 the child of his adoption ; he must cast on the wide
 and unpitying world, the orphan, whom he has
 promised to protect ; he would imagine he heard
 his mother, crying to him in plaintive accents from
 the grave : you undertook the care of my child,
 this reflection enabled me to descend into the tomb
 in peace, and now you have driven him from your
 roof, without hope, without resource, consumed by
 a tormenting passion ; behold ! he languishes, he
 expires. Is it thus you fulfil your vows ? Eliza,
 my husband could never support such a reflection.
 Rather than purjure his faith, he would keep Fred-
 erick with him ; but then, adieu to happiness, cru-
 el distrust would poison every gesture, every look,
 the least word would be suspected, and domestick
 peace would be forever banished. And should I
 even be aloof from his suspicion ? Alas ! you know
 how long he doubted of the possibility of my lov-
 ing him ? in short, after seven years constant assi-
 duity, I had accomplished inspiring him with a
 perfect confidence in this respect ; who knows,

whether this event, would not entirely destroy it ? so much congeniality between Frederick and myself, so much conformity of tastes and of opinions ; he will never believe that a heart new to love like mine, can see with indifference, the passion with which I have inspired so transcendant a being he would at least doubt ; I should see this respectable man, a prey to suspicion ! that countenance which now reflects the calm of content and satisfaction, would be darkened with cares and inquietude : the felicity I promised myself, of seeing him happy through me, to the end of my existence would forever vanish ! No, Eliza, no, I feel that purchasing his repose, at the price of perpetual dissimulation, is more than to pay for it with my life ; but there is no sacrifice upon which I ought not to resolve for him. Let Frederick seek a pretext to leave us, you will say ? but what pretext can he find ? You know that M. d'Albe alone excepted, his mother was on bad terms with every one of her relations, and that his father was a stranger. He then has no family, no friends but us, what reason

could he alledge for such a departure, particularly, at the very moment, when the care of the manufactory, is almost entirely committed to his charge ? What could M. d'Albe think ? he would believe him either mad or ungrateful ; he would speak of it to me continually, what could I say ? or rather he would suspect the truth ; he knows Frederick too thoroughly, not to be persuaded that the dread of injuring his benefactor, is the sole motive that could induce him to quit this asylum ; but the moment his suspicions are awakened towards him, they would be to me also ; he would remember my emotion ; I could no longer be sad with impunity, and from that instant all my fears would be realized. No, no, let Frederick stay, and be silent, I will carefully avoid being alone with him, and when to prevent it, is impossible, my extreme coldness shall deprive him of all hopes of profiting by it. But do you think he wishes it ? ah ! my friend, if you knew the soul of Frederick as I know it, you would believe, that although the violence of passion may have subjugated him for a moment, he is too noble to persist

in the desire of vicious and dishonourable gratification.

Why has unjust heaven led him towards a woman, who belongs to another. Doubtless, she who had been free to make him happy, would have been too But I know not what I say ; pardon me Eliza, my senses are not perfectly about me ; the image of this unfortunate being pursues me ; I hear his accents, they reverberate in my heart ! Alas ! if his grief proceeded from another cause, humanity would require of me, to soften it by all the tenderness that friendship allows, but because it is I whom he loves, it is I for whom he suffers, I must be harsh and barbarous towards him ? How much does this shock the eternal laws of justice and of truth . . . write to me Eliza, guide me, I know not what to wish, I know not upon what to resolve, I am ill, and will not leave my room.

LETTER XIX.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

I have not yet left my chamber; the idea of meeting Frederick makes me shudder, I have pleaded indisposition, and in fact, I am ill, my hand trembles as I write, and I find it impossible to calm the agitation of my spirits. What must this terrible passion be, if the sight of it, if the pity which it inspires, is capable of producing the degree of suffering I endure? Ah! now I bless heaven, for having guaranteed me against its influence! It is now, that I feel I shall be forever indifferent; I was in more danger, when I believed, it might be a source of felicity; but now when I see with what impetuosity it hurries on to folly and crime, I feel a horror of it, which will preserve me from it, the rest of my days.

Eliza, O my Eliza! it was him, I have seen him, he has just opened the door; he has thrown in a paper, and precipitately retreated; his sup-

pliant look, seemed to say, *read*. But ought I? I dare not take it. . . . And yet if any one came, if it were seen. . . . I have read it; ah, my friend! these are the first tears I have shed since yesterday: I have bathed his note with my tears; I will endeavour to transcribe it for you.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

“Why do you conceal yourself? why fly the
 “day? It is I alone, who should dread it. You,
 “you are pure as the heaven, from whence it
 “springs.”

Adieu, Eliza, I hear my husband, I will go,
 and encompass myself with my children. I know
 not if I shall answer it, I know not what to say....
 No, it is better to be silent. Adieu.

Note.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

You avoid me, I perceive it ; you are ill, and it is I who am its cause ; I dissemble with a Father, whom I love ; my heart offends a benefactor, who loads me with kindness ; Clara, heaven has not given me courage to support such woe.

Note.

CLARA TO FREDERICK.

What would you dare to hint at ? A moment of inconsideration led us to the verge of an abyss ; an instant's weakness would plunge us into it. Can I have esteemed you too highly, in supposing you could repair your error ; and will you do nothing for me ?

Note.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

I am not master of my love, but I am of my life ; I cannot cease to offend you, but in ceasing to exist ; every palpitation of my heart is a crime ; suffer me to die ?

Note.

CLARA TO FREDERICK.

No, we have no right over our lives, when that of another is attached to ours. Tremble at the blow, you would strike. It is not you alone, it will destroy.

Note.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

I cannot resist you the tone, of your note,

a glimpse of heaven, I thought I perceived in it....
 Ah ! Clara, were it possible.....since you persist
 in not seeing me alone, permit me at least, to
 write, that I may explain myself ; perhaps I shall
 not then appear so guilty in your eyes ; to-morrow
 morning, when I go to enquire for your health,
 deign to receive my letter.

LETTER XX.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

In the abyss of misery, into which I have fallen, if there is any tie that can attach me to life, it is the hope of regaining your esteem ; in shewing you my heart, such as it was, such as it is, now animated by you, perhaps you will not blush at the altar, on which you will be worshipped, until the last hour of my existence.

You know, Clara, that I was brought up by a mother, who had married contrary to the wishes of her family. Love alone, filled up her days ; she transfused her soul into mine, with the nourishment I drew from her bosom. She spoke to me unceasingly of my father, of the happiness of a mutual attachment ; I witnessed the charm of their union, and the excessive anguish of my mother, at the death of her husband ; an anguish, which consumed her by degrees, and destroyed her in a very few years after him.

All these images, early disposed my heart to tenderness ; which was still further excited to it, by dwelling amidst the mountains. It is in this wild and sublime scenery, that the imagination becomes exalted, and an enthusiasm is kindled in the heart, which ends by consuming it ; it was there that I created to myself a phantom, to which I delighted in offering a sort of worship ; often after having climbed one of those awful heights, from which the eye wanders over immensity : she is there, cried I, to myself, in a tender ecstasy, she, whom heaven has created, to constitute the felicity of my life ; perhaps my eyes are turned towards the spot, where she is mellowing to perfection, for my happiness ; perhaps at this moment, she is thinking of him, whom she is to love : I personified her ; I gave her features ; I gifted her with every virtue ; I concentrated in a single being, all those qualifications and accomplishments, which books and society had presented to my thoughts. At length, exhausting every thing delightful in nature, and all that my heart could adore, I imagined Clara !..... But no, that look, the most powerful of thy

charms, that expression which nothing can paint, nothing define, it belonged only to thee to possess ; imagination itself, could not reach it !

My mother had impressed on my mind, the soundest principles of morality, and the most profound respect, for the sacred tie of marriage ; when I arrived here, how far was I from thinking that a married woman, that the wife of my benefactor, could be a dangerous object for me. I was so much the less on my guard, because, although the first moment I beheld you, all my prejudices vanished, and I thought you charming, yet a sly, I had almost said a malicious, smile which often plays on your lips, made me doubt the goodness of your heart. Perhaps too, you have not forgotten, that at that time, I ventured to tell you more than once, your husband was dearer to me than you ; it was not, that I did not even then feel a sort of contradiction, between my reason and my heart, which surprised me, because I had until then, been a stranger to it. I could not explain to myself, how, loving your husband better, I felt most attracted

towards you ; by dint of questioning myself, on this point, I concluded, that as you were most agreeable, it was quite natural I should prefer your society to his, although I was fundamentally more attached to him. By degrees I discovered in you, not more goodness than in M. d'Albe, for in that no human being can surpass him, but a soul, more elevated, more tender and more delicate ; I saw you alternately gentle, sublime, touching and irresistible. Every thing great, every thing excellent is so natural in you, that it is necessary to observe you closely, to know how to appreciate you, and the simplicity, with which you exercise the most difficult virtues, would make them appear as ordinary qualifications, to an inattentive observer..... From that moment, I never ceased to contemplate you ; I prided myself on my admiration ; I regarded it as the first of duties, since it was virtue which had inspired it, and whilst I imagined I loved only her in you, I became intoxicated with all the delirium of passion. Clara, I acknowledge it, I often felt such lively impressions when beside you, as might have awakened me to my real sentiments ; but you

are, doubtless, ignorant, how ingenious we are, in deceiving ourselves, when we foresee that the truth will snatch us from that which delights us ; an incomprehensible instinct, lends a subtilty to the mind, aided by sophistry, it dazzles reason and subjugates conscience. However mine was not yet silent ; I experienced an inward discontent, I felt a confused sensation of uneasiness, the true cause of which, I would not see ; this was without doubt, the secret source of the joy I felt, at the arrival of Mademoiselle de Raincy ; in beholding her, radiant with all your charms, I endued her also with your virtues, and believed myself saved. I was several days captivated by her beauty, she is more regularly handsome than you ; I dared to compare you Ah ! Clara, if the earth contains nothing more lovely than Adelaide, heaven alone can present me your model !

You esteem me enough, I hope, to believe that I did not require much time to measure, the distance which separates your characters ; I recollect that one day, when you were eulogising her to me,

giving me to understand your design of promoting an union betwixt us, I felt humbled, that you should suppose, after having known you, I could content myself with Adelaide, and that you should esteem me so little, as to believe, that if beauty could attract me, something else was not requisite to fix my affections. O Clara ! exclaimed I, often, addressing myself to your image, if you desire to see any other woman beloved, cease to be yourself the perfect model, whom they should all imitate ; no longer shew us, that they may unite good sense with candour, energy with gentleness, and perform with dignity, all those little duties, to which their sex and their lot subject them.....

Clara, I did not yet confess to myself, that I loved you ; but often when attracted towards you by my heart, encouraged by the touching expression of your friendship, I have felt ready to press you in my arms, from an impulse, for which I could not account. I retreated with difficulty, I dared not look at you, nor touch your hand, I recoiled even from the touch of your garments ; in short, I did from instinct, that which I ought to have done from reason :

and yet one day. . . . Clara, dare I tell it, one day you begged me to untie the ribband of your veil ; while doing it, my eyes caught your bosom, a movement quicker than thought prompted me, I dared to press my lips upon your neck ; Adolphus was in my arms, you thought it was him ; I did not undeceive you, but I carried away with me a consuming flame, a tumultuous agitation ; I discovered the truth, and viewed myself with horror.

At length the day, the fatal day, that my base weakness betrayed you, that which you never should have learnt. How far was I from believing, that it would so have ended ! All the morning, I had been rambling through the country, and raising my soul in sincere piety, towards the author of my being. I had conjured him to preserve me from a seduction, the cause of which was so enchanting, its effects so fatal. These religious emotions, restored me to peace. I felt as if a divinity had placed himself between us both, and I dared to approach you without dread.

As a perfect calm, is often the precursor of a violent tempest, a soothing tranquillity, to which I had long been a stranger, diffused itself through my breast, and spoke comfort to my heart. I accepted with eagerness, the walk which M. d'Albe proposed, in order to behold again the beneficent appearance of nature, which had produced such salutary effects on me in the morning ; but I beheld her with you, and she was no longer the same, the earth presented me, only the traces of your footsteps ; the heavens, the air which you breathed ; a veil of love was cast over all nature, and shewed me your image, in every object I gazed at. In short, Clara, at the instant in which I saw you ready to sacrifice your life for your son, it was then alone, I felt all you were to me. A witness of the courageous sensibility, which prompted you to staunch a horrible wound, of that inexhaustible goodness, which pointed out to you every means of consoling the wretched, I then said to myself, that the most contemptible of beings would be him who could see, and not adore you, unless it were him, who dared to avow it to you.



It was in this disposition of mind, Clara, that I left the cottage, in which you had appeared like a beneficent deity ; the feeble light of the moon, diffused something melancholy and tender over the universe ; the soft and balmy air breathed voluptuousness, the calm which reigned around us, was disturbed only by the plaintive notes of the nightingale ; we were alone in the world I divined the danger, and had strength to move from you ; it was then that you approached, I felt you, and was lost ; the truth, until then concealed with difficulty, escaped, burning from my bosom, and you beheld me, as guilty, as wretched, as it is given to mortals to be. At this moment, when I had just yielded with phrensy, to all the excess of passion ; at this moment, when you recall to my recollection, the outrage I committed against my benefactor, when the image of my ingratitude, all horrible as it was, combated but feebly, the sentiment which drew me towards you, I perceive my father wild, distracted, I would fly ; you command me to return and dissemble : dissemble ; I ! good heavens, I believed it was easier to die than

to obey you ; I was mistaken ; impossibility exists no longer, when Clara commands, her power over me, like that of the divinity himself, stops only where love commences.

Clara, I will not deceive you, if in your plans for me, you anticipate hopes of my cure, you deceive yourself ; I cannot, I will not cease to love you ; no, I will not ; there is no part of myself, which combats the adoration I bear you. I will love you, because you are what is most perfect in creation, and my passion injures no one ; I will love you, in short, because you command me to do so ; have you not desired me to live ?

Listen, Clara. I have examined my heart, and I do not believe I offend my father, in loving you. By what right could he exact us to know, without appreciating you, and of what does my love deprive him ? Have I conceived a hope, have I even a wish that you should return my tenderness ? Ah ! beware how you believe it ? So far am I from this, that it would be to me the greatest of evils ; for it would

be the only means of destroying my admiration.... Clara contemptible, would be no longer worthy of my love ; Clara degraded, would be no longer you ; cease to be perfect ; cease to be yourself, and I no longer fear you. After this declaration, strange perhaps, but true, but sincere, what do you risk in permitting me to love you ? Suffer me always to adore virtue, and to lend her your features, to encourage me in the pursuit of her, then there is nothing of which she will not render me capable... My reason, my conscience are no longer but emanations from you ; it is to you, that belongs the care of my future conduct. I place my destiny in your hands, and render you responsible, for the manner in which I accomplish it ; if your cruelty rejects me, if I am forbidden to approach you, every spring of my existence is loosened, my faculties sink into a void. Removed from you, I am no longer myself, I can no longer distinguish virtue, humanity, honour ! Oh ! celestial Clara ! let me see, let me hear, let me adore you ; I shall be great, virtuous, magnanimous ; a chaste passion like mine, can offend no one ; it is a child of

heaven, whom the divinity has permitted to dwell amongst mortals.

I will not quit this abode, I will employ every moment of my life in imitating you, and contributing to the happiness of my father. This worthy man loves me, he entreats me to direct the studies of his son ; Clara, I attach myself to your family, to your fate, to your children ; I will become a part of you in spite even of yourself. This is my vocation, I will have no other. Speak to me no more of other ties, of marriage, all is over, my fate is irrecoverably fixed.

I promise you to revere in silence, the sacred object of my worship ; consumed with passion, a prey to futile wishes, neither my words, nor looks, shall betray my anguish ; you will forget what I have dared to avow to you, and I swear never to recal it to your recollection. Clara, if my situation appears distressing to you ; if your tender heart could be touched with compassion, do not pity me ; there is in your last note, a word ! . . . Source of

ravishing illusion, it made me taste for a moment, all the felicity, the ecstatic felicity, to which humanity can reach ! O Clara ! do not rob me of my erreur ! What would you gain ? I know it is one, but it enchants, it consoles me ; it is it which will dry up my tears ; leave me its precious possession ; it was not by your own consent, you gave it me ; I seized it, in short, when you commanded me to live ; would you have the barbarity to tear it from me ?

LETTER XXI.

CLARA TO FREDERICK.

Your letter is pitiable. Were it not that of a wretched being, whom we must endeavour to reclaim, it would be that of a mad man, who should be driven from our roof? The delirium of your reason alone, could blind you to the contradictions with which it is filled. This word, which I ought to disclaim, this expression, which alone could re-attach you to life, is it not the same which would render Clara contemptible in your eyes, if she dared to pronounce it? And was ever a chaste passion alive to culpable desires, and did it ever purloin guilty indulgence? Unfortunate creature! examine yourself well; your heart will teach you, that love cannot exist without hope, and that you entertain the criminal desire of seducing the wife of your benefactor: It is possible that the weakness of which I was guilty, in listening to, in replying to you; that which I have shewn in tolerating your presence, after the inconceivable vow you have ta-

ken, may authorise your presumptuous hopes ; but know, that though, even my heart should escape me, you would not be more happy ; for Clara would expire, rather than be guilty.

I will answer your letter another time, at present it is impossible.

LETTER XXII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Ah ! what have you said, my tender friend ! to what horrible conviction, have you just awakened me ? Who, I...I love ! You believe it, and yet speak to me ? And you do not blush at the name of friend, which I dare to give you ? What ! under the very eye of the most respectable of men, of my husband, a perjurer of my faith, I should dare to love the son of his adoption ? the son whom his goodness called here, and his confidence placed in my hands ; instead of the virtuous counsels, with which I promised to impress his heart, *I inspire him with a criminal passion ?* instead of the example I should set before him, *I participate in it ?....* O shame ! shame ! every word that I trace reflects a crime, and I turn away my view in shuddering.... Tell me, Eliza, what must I do ? If you yet esteem me enough to direct me, save me from this abyss, which you have just shewn me, in all its horror. I am ready to do any thing ; there is no sacrifice which

I would not make : must I cease to see him, banish him, pierce his heart and my own ? I am resolved upon it, virtue is dearer to me than my own life, than his Unfortunate being ! in what a state is he ! he speaks not, he consumes himself in silence, and for the reward of such an effort, I must say to him :—begone from hence ; go, expire with misery and despair ; you asked only to behold me, this blessing alone consoled you, compensated you for all. Well, I refuse it Eliza, I think I see him ; his eyes fixed on me, their mute expression declaring to me all he suffers, and you command me to resist it ? How ? cannot we cherish honour without being barbarous and unnatural ; and does virtue ever exact human victims ? Suffer me, suffer me to adopt a more gentle method ; why irritate wounds, instead of healing them ? Without doubt, I am resolved upon his departure, but my friendship must prepare him for it ; we must discover a pretext ; an inclination to travel, and indulge a natural and laudable curiosity, common to his age, will serve as one ; and I have no doubt of M. d'Albe's consent. Trust to me, Eliza, the

care of separating myself from Frederick ; ah ! I am too much interested in it, not to succeed !

How shall I express to you what I suffer ? Adelaide went home yesterday, and my husband, uneasy at the state of my health, leaves me as seldom as possible ; I am compelled to restrain my tears, I tremble lest he should see their traces, and discover from whence they flow. He is surprised, that I have forbidden every one's coming into my chamber. My good friend, said he to me, just now, why do you admit only the children and myself to your room ; has my Frederick displeased you ?..... This simple question made me shudder ; I fancied he had guessed the state of my mind, and wanted to sound me. O, torments of a troubled conscience ! it is thus, that I suspect in the most upright, the best of men, a dissimulation of which I alone am capable ; ah ! I see too well, the first punishment of the wicked, is to believe that others resemble them.

LETTER XXIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

This morning for the first time, I went down to breakfast ; I was pale, and feeble ; Frederick was there, reading beside the fire-place ; when he saw me enter, he changed colour, laid down his book, and approached me ; I did not venture to look at him ; my husband brought me a chair ; in turning it round, my eyes caught the looking-glass ; I met those of Frederick, and not able to support their expression, I fell motionless into my seat..... Frederick terrified, advanced, and M. d'Albe as much alarmed as he was, put me into his arms, while he ran to my chamber for salts. Frederick's arm was round my waist ; I felt his hand upon my heart ; all my blood rushed towards it ; he felt it beat with violence. Clara, said he, to me, in a low voice, and mine too, it is there only, that there is life and motion..... tell me, added he, bending his face towards mine, tell me, I conjure thee, that it is not hatred which makes it thus palpitate.....

Eliza, I inhaled his breath, it convulsed my soul, I felt my brain wander.....In my terror, I repulsed his hand, I raised myself ; leave me said I, in the name of heaven leave me, you know not the ill you do me. My husband came in, his exertions soon recovered me. When I had got a little better, he expressed to me all the uneasiness my situation gave him. I never saw you suffer so strangely, said he, my Clara, I fear that a revulsion of milk is the cause of this change, which seriously alarms me ; let me conjure you, consult some enlightened physician. Eliza, my heart almost burst, it cannot support the weight of continual dissimulation ; in seeing the error into which I led my husband, in seeing beside me, the too well loved partner of my guilt, I could have wished, that the earth had swallowed us both. I pressed M. d'Albe's hands upon my forehead....My friend, said I, to him, I feel myself, in fact, very ill ; but do not refuse me your cares, heal me, save me, restore me to the power of consecrating my days to your happiness, whatever means you may adopt, be assured of my everlasting gratitude. He looked

surprised, I trembled with the dread of having said too much ; then endeavouring to give it another turn, I attributed the weakness of my head to the noise and strong light, and desired to return to my chamber. He begged Frederick to help him to support me ; I could not have refused his arm, without awakening suspicions, which a single word would be perhaps, sufficient to produce ; but, Eliza, shall I tell you, in raising my eyes towards those of Frederick, I thought I perceived in them, something rather touched, than sorrowful ; I even thought I distinguished a slight movement of pleasure. Ah, I no longer doubt ! my weakness has betrayed him my secret, my emotion before M. d'Albe, did not escape him ; he has seen my combats, he has learned that he is beloved, and perhaps he exulted in a disorder, which shewed him the extent of his power ? Eliza, this idea restores me to pride and to courage ; believe me, I shall know how to conquer myself, and to undeceive him ; it is time this torment should cease, your letter has pointed out my duty, and at least, I am yet worthy of listening to it. I am going to write to him ;

yes, my beloved friend, I am resolved ; he shall go. May he forget me, may he form some happier attachment : heaven is my witness, that this wish is sincere ; and to gain fortitude to resist him, I will go and read over that letter, in which you paint to me the duties of a wife and mother, in colours which it belonged only to my inestimable friend, to pourtray. Adieu.

LETTER XXIV.

CLARA TO FREDERICK.

I do not know to what degree virtue has lost her influence over your soul, and if the passion, with which I have inspired you, has not so far degraded you, as to render you incapable of an honest and courageous action ; but I declare to you that in two days, if you have not executed what I am about to prescribe to you, Clara will no longer esteem you.

My husband loves you, and centres his happiness in your society ; I have hitherto, and I will still, leave him ignorant, of an error, which did he suspect, it would destroy his peace, and perhaps his affection for you ; but in concealing the truth from him, I have necessarily imposed on myself the duty of acting as he would do, were it known to him. Go then, Frederick ; leave a place which you fill with sorrow, purify your heart, and above all forget a woman, whom the most sacred duties com-

mand you to respect ; I will see you only when this is accomplished.

An inclination to travel, is one of the most predominant in young men ; adopt this pretext to remove from hence ; express to your father, your desire to go and improve yourself in visiting foreign climes. The excellent man whom you offend, will afflict himself at your absence, but will sacrifice his own satisfaction, to that of an ungrateful being, who so badly recompences him. As soon as you have obtained his permission, which I shall hasten by every means in my power, you must set off without delay. I forbid you to see me alone... I will not receive your adieus ; do not however suppose, that I think this precaution necessary to my peace ; no, to adhere to virtue, is with me a necessity, and not an effort ; and could it be ever shaken, it would not be by the man who, suffering himself to be governed by a guilty passion, excuses instead of combating it, and humbles her who is its object, in rendering her the cause of the degradation to which he is reduced.

LETTER XXV.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

Why is it necessary coldly to insult the victim whom we devote to death ? why was it necessary for you to inflict it on me, by talking to me of your hatred ? The command for my departure was enough ; but it was sweet to you to shew me, to what a degree I am odious in your sight. I did not recognise Clara in such barbarity.

You see I am composed ; your letter has congealed the terrible agitations of my blood, and I am in a condition to reason.

Why should I go, Clara ? If it is for your husband, and that the sentiment which I bear in my heart, is an outrage to him, where will you find a spot in the universe, in which I shall cease to offend him ?, beneath the frozen poles, under the burning tropic, whilst my heart continues to beat, it will adore Clara ; if it is a cold pity which inter-

ests you in me, I reject it. It is not that which will soothe my woes, and you make me too wretched, for me to suffer you to become the arbiter of my fate.

LETTER XXVI.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Where am I, Eliza, and what have I done ; an alarming fatality pursues me ; I see the precipice into which I am plunging, and it seems as if an invisible hand thrust me into it in despite of myself. It was not enough that a criminal passion had corrupted my heart, to avow it was still wanting, to complete my shame. Led away by a power which I had no force to combat, Frederick knows the excess of a passion, which makes of your friend, the most contemptible of creatures. . . . I know not why I yet write to you ; there are situations which admit of no consolation, and your pity can no more snatch me from remorse, than your counsels repair my crime. Eternal repentance has taken possession of my heart, it rends, it devours it ; I dare not measure the abyss, in which I lose myself, and I know not where to fix the limits of my weakness. . . . I adore Frederick, I see only him in the whole universe ; he knows it, I delight to repeat it to him ; were he there

I would tell it to him again, for in the delirium to which I am a prey, I no longer know myself.... I wished to write to you all that had passed ; but I cannot, my trembling hand can hardly trace these unsteady lines.....in a calmer moment perhaps.... Ah ! what have I said ? calm, peace, for me, are fled forever !!!

LETTER XXVII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Since three days Eliza, I have attempted in vain to write to you ; my hand has refused to trace the testimony of my shame ; I will do it however ; I want your contempt ; I merit it, and I ask it ; your indulgence would be hateful to me ; my crime ought not to remain unpunished, and forgiveness would humble me, more than reproaches. Remember, Eliza, that you can no longer love me without debasing yourself, and at least leave me the consolation of esteeming myself in my friend.

Frederick's letter,* which you find joined to this, had restored me to a sense of my own dignity ; I was astonished that I should have feared a man who could dare to tell me he disdained my esteem : impatient to prove to him that he had lost it, I conquered my indisposition to appear at dinner ; my

* Letter XXV.

manner was calm, indifferent, and imposing ; I looked haughtily at Frederick, and solely occupied with my husband and my children, I hardly replied to two or three questions he addressed me, and found a cruel delight, in shewing how little I regarded him. When we left the table, Adolphus seated himself in my lap : he gave me an account of the different studies in which he had been engaged during my illness ; it was constantly his cousin Frederick who had taught him this, and a lesson never wearied him, when it was his cousin Frederick who gave it. It is so amusing to read with him, said my son, he explains to me so perfectly all I do not understand ; however this morning he would not, all I could do, tell me what *virtue* was, he desired me to ask you, Mamma ? It is firmness my son replied I, it is courage to execute rigorously all we think right, whatever pain it may give us. It is a great and generous impulse, of which your father offers you the frequent example, but of which your cousin could certainly give you no idea.... In saying these last words, which Frederick alone understood, I cast an eye of disdain towards him....

O my Eliza ! he was pale, tears rolled in his eyes, his features expressed despair ; but faithful to his promise of repressing his emotions before my husband, he continued to converse with an appearance of tranquillity. M. d'Albe, with his eyes fixed on his book, did not observe the condition of his friend, and replied without looking at him. As for me, Eliza, from this moment, all my resolution vanished ; I thought I had been severe and barbarous ; I would have given my life, to have addressed a single tender word to Frederick, to repair the wound I had inflicted on him ; and for the first time I wished M. d'Albe to leave the room. Day closed apace : plunged in a reverie, I had ceased talking, when M. d'Albe no longer seeing to read, asked me for some music. I complied, Frederick brought my harp, and I sung, I hardly know what ; I only remember that it was a ballad, that Frederick shed tears, and that mine, which I restrained with difficulty, almost choaked me in falling again upon my heart. At this moment, Eliza, some one asked for my husband ; he went out, a confused instinct of the danger which

I was in, made me rise precipitately to follow him ; my gown caught in the pedals, I missed my foot, fell, and Frederick received me in his arms—I attempted to call, sobs choaked my utterance ; he pressed me forcibly to his bosomat this moment all vanished, duty, husband, honor ; Frederick was the universe, and love, delicious love, my every thoughtClara, cried he, a word, a single word, say what agitates you ? Ah, cried I, desperately, if you would know, create me language to express it ! I sunk into a chair ; he threw himself at my feet, I felt his arms about my waist ; my face leaning on his forehead, inhaling his breath ; I no longer resisted. Oh ! adored Clara, cried he, what inexpressible delight do I feel at this moment ; supreme felicity rushes into my soul : yes, this delirium of happiness, was reserved for the mortal beloved by thee. Ah ! let me hear again from those adored lips, the celestial truth, of which the hope alone, has breathed intoxication through my veins !If I love you Frederick ! dare you ask it ? Conceive what must be the passion, which reduces Clara to the state in which you behold her :

yes, fervently, passionately, I adore you, and at this moment when to tell it to you I forget the most sacred duties, I delight in the excess of my weakness, which proves to you, that of my love. Oh ! indelible remembrance of shame and pleasure ! at this moment, Frederick's lips touched mine ; I was lost, if virtue by a last effort, had not rent aside the veil of voluptuousness, with which I was enveloped ; tearing myself from Frederick's arms, I threw myself at his feet. Ah ! spare me, I implore you, cried I ; render me not vile, that you still may love me. In this moment of disorder, in which I am entirely submitted to your power, you may, I know, obtain an easy victory, but if I am yours to day, to-morrow the arms of death encircle me ; I swear it in the name of that honour which I outrage, but which is more necessary to the soul of Clara, than the air she breathes : Frederick, Frederick, behold her, prostrate, humbled at your feet, and merit her eternal gratitude, in not rendering her the most degraded, the basest of creatures, . . . Rise, cried he, retreating from me, rise, angelic woman, object of my profoundest venera-

tion, and of my eternal love ! thy lover resists not the accent of thy agony ; but in the name of that heaven, whose image you are, forget not that the greatest sacrifice of which man is capable, you have just obtained from me. He rushed out of the room ; I went to my chamber, reason had almost forsaken her seat ; long faintings succeeded these violent agitations. When I recovered my senses, I found my husband beside my bed ; I repulsed him with terror, thinking I saw in him the sovereign arbiter of destinies, about to pronounce my doom. What is the matter, my Clara, cried he, in a sorrowful tone, dear and tender friend, it is your husband who holds out his arms to you. I was silent, I felt that if I had spoken, I should have told all ; perhaps I ought ; instinct prompted me to do so ; but whilst the confession trembled on my lips, reflexion restrained me. Far be from me the barbarous candour, which would solace my heart, at the expence of my worthy husband ! In concealing it, I remain alone charged with the weight of my misfortune and his ; the truth would devolve upon him a part of the woe, which should belong

to me alone. Too respectable man ! you would never support the idea of knowing your wife, your friend, a prey to the torments of a criminal passion ; and the necessity of despising her who was once your glory ; and of banishing from your roof, he whom you had taken to your bosom, would embitter your last days ; I should see your venerable countenance, which has never yet reflected aught but benevolence and humanity, changed by the regret of having loved only ungrateful beings ; suffused with the shame, which I shall have cast over it ; I should hear you calling on death, which grief would, perhaps, accelerate, and to the remorse of perjury, I should thus add the weight of homicide. O miserable Clara ! does not thy blood freeze in thy veins, at the contemplation of such an image ? Is it indeed thee, who has fallen into this gulph of misery ? And canst thou know thyself, in the picture of a faithless woman, who dares not acknowledge what passes in her heart, in the dread of striking a death blow, into that of her husband ? What ? And will not such a picture, force thee to abjure the detestable passion that consumes thee ? Will it not

compel thee to abhor the odious accomplice of thy crime. Frederick!..Frederick, what have I said! I hate him! I renounce a happiness for which, there is no expression! the bliss of hearing him say he loves me? Banish him from this asylum, no longer see, no longer hear him? Ha! what are the crimes that would not be too severely punished by such a sacrifice? And how have I deserved it? Retired from the world, I was tranquil in my solitude; centering my happiness in that of my husband, I formed no other wish: he brings me a charming young man, endued with all that virtue has of most noble; genius, most captivating, and nature most attractive: he asks my friendship for him, he leaves us continually together; morning, noon and night, I see him every where, he is never absent; always alone beneath the shades, in the midst of nature, which is renovating its endless beauties, we must have been created to have hated each other, if we had not loved. Imprudent husband! why thus approach two beings, whom mutual sympathy attracted towards each other? Two beings new to love, who might feel and nourish its first

impressions, without suspecting the source from whence they sprung. Why, above all, spread over them the dangerous veil of friendship, which must so long remain an illusion, to blind them to their real sentiments ! It belonged to you, to your experience, to foresee the danger, and preserve us from it : far from this, when it is your hand which draws us into it, which strews it with flowers, and hastens us towards it ; why terrible and menacing, do you come to reproach us with a fault, which is yours alone, and command us to expiate it, by the most agonizing punishment ? What have I said, Eliza, it is Frederick I love, it is my husband I accuse ! 'tis Frederick, who has seen me weak, resistless within his arms, it is he who I would detain here ! O Eliza ! you will be greatly changed, if you recognize your friend, in one who in such a situation, can have any difficulty in knowing how to act.

LETTER XXVIII.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

Clara, too enchanting Clara, who art thou, that thou shouldst create in my bosom, feelings so opposed to each other ? To transport me in an instant, from the excess of happiness to that of misery ? . . . Those melting eyes, which it is impossible to behold without the liveliest emotions, those eyes which belong only to Clara, the cherished idol of my heart, the first, the only object of my love ; those eyes in which you yesterday allowed me to read the expression of tenderness, are to day, clouded with grief and severity ; and my soul, in which you reign despotically, my soul, which no longer feels, but as you inspire it, sinks beneath your sorrow without knowing its cause. O my gentle, my charming friend ! beware of thinking yourself guilty, nor of afflicting yourself for the happiness you have given me ; repentance should not enter where guilt never dwelt. Thou dread crime, my Clara ! a single look of thine would annihilate it.

Too adored and timid Clara, dare you think that the divinity who created you in his image, leads us to vice, by the path of ecstatic, of transcendant happiness? No, no, these ardours, these transports, these enchanting emotions, secure me against remorse, and I feel myself too happy to be criminal. Ah! let me once more regain those moments of bliss, when straining thee to my bosom, and inhaling thy celestial breathings, I gathered from thy lips, all that the immensity of the universe, can bestow of heaven on mortals.

Clara, you put me away from you, but I did not leave you; imagination placed you in my bosom, I overwhelmed you with tears and caresses; my eager mouth pressed thine; Clara did not defend herself, Clara participated in my transports; with no other guide, but her heart and nature, she forgot the world; she was awake only to love, she saw only her lover. Ah! Clara, it is not in such bliss that crime exists.

Clara, I love you to idolatry, your image consumes me, your approach enflames me ; too many sensations madden me ; I must die, or indulge them. Let me see you, I conjure you, do not fly me, let me press you once more to my heart, my arms open to receive you, but it is a shadow, which mocks me. I write to you on my knees, the paper is bathed with my tears ; Oh ! Clara, one more of thy embraces, yet one more, there are pleasures too lively, to be tasted twice, without expiring.

LETTER XXIX.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

I cannot sleep ; I wander through the house, I seek the last place that you occupied ; my lips press the sofa on which you so long reposed, I seize the flower which has escaped from your bosom, I kiss the traces of your footsteps, I approach the apartment where you sleep, that sanctuary which would be the object of my most ardent desires, were it not that of my most profound respect. My tears bathe the threshold of your door ; I listen if the silence of night, will not enable me to catch some of your movements.....I listen....O Clara, Clara ! I am not mistaken, I heard thee groan, my friend, thou weepest, what then causes thy pain ? (1) When I owe thee a bliss of which the rest of the world can form no idea, since no mortal has been loved by thee, what can still afflict thee ? Clara,

(1) If he did not ask this question, he would be a monster, for the folly of love would be incomplete.

[*Author's note.*]

how feeble is thy passion, if it leaves thee a thought or a feeling but for itself, and if its influence has not extinguished all the other faculties of thy soul ! as for me, I am alive neither to the past, nor the future : absorbed by thee, I see thee alone in the universe, all other beings are annihilated in my thoughts ; they pass before me like a shadow, I have no longer senses to see, nor a heart to love them . . . Friendship, duty, gratitude, I no longer feel them, love, ardent, impassioned love, has swallowed up all : it has united in a single point, all the sensible parts of my being, and has impressed it with the image of my Clara ; this is the temple in which I adore thee in silence, when thou art far from me ; but if I hear the sound of thy voice, if my eyes meet thine, if I press thee gently to my bosom . . . then it is no longer my heart alone which palpitates, it is my whole being ; thine eyes shed a torrent of voluptuousness which innundates my soul ; lost in love and tenderness, I feel all my faculties bound towards thee ; I would fold thee in my arms, inhale thy breath, feel thy

heart beat against mine, and lose myself with thee, in a heaven of transport.

But oh ! my Clara, you alone unite this inconceivable mixture of modesty and voluptuousness, which attracts and repulses continually, and eternalizes love ; you alone, blend that which at once commands respect and awakens desire ; but where shall I find words to express the sentiment with which an enchanting woman inspires me ; she who is the most perfect of creatures, the living image of the divinity, and what language would be worthy of her ? I feel that all my ideas become confused before thee, as before an angel descended from heaven ; engrossed with thy adored image, I have no other feeling, but that of adoration for thy perfections ; every other thought but of thee has vanished ; in vain I seek to fix, to collect, to arrange my ideas ; in vain do I seek words to trace lines which might paint to thee what I feel : expression fails me, my pen drags painfully along, and if my first necessity were not to pour into thy bosom, all the feelings which oppress me, alarmed at the greatness

of the task, I should remain silent, overwhelmed
beneath its power, and feeling too much to be able
to think.

LETTER XXX.

CLARA TO FREDERICK.

No, I will not see you ; too much presumption has lost me, a bitter experience has taught me, that I must no longer dare to confide in myself. I write to you, because I have a great deal to say, and because in short, there must be an end to the dreadful state in which we are.

I ought to begin, by commanding you to write to me no more, for these tender letters, in spite of myself, I press them to my lips, I lay them to my heart, they breathe poison.....Frederick, I love you, and have never loved but you ; the image of your happiness, that happiness which you ask of me, and which I could give, agitates my senses, and disturbs my reason ; to bestow it, I should count as nothing, life, honour, all, even to my future destiny : to make you happy, and die, would be all for Clara, she would have lived long enough ; but to purchase your happiness by perfidy ; Frede-

rick, you would not take it at such a price.

Rash youth, you wish Clara to be yours, yours alone ! Is she then at liberty to bestow herself ? Does she belong to herself ? If those eyes dare look on that heaven which we outrage, thou wilt there see the oaths she has taken, it is there they are registered ! And who would you, that she should betray ? her husband, and your benefactor, he who has taken you to his bosom, who cherishes and loves you ; he whose confidence has placed in our hands, the sacred deposite of his honour. An assassin would deprive him only of life, and you, as the reward of his kindness, you would sully his asylum, seduce his wife, and substitute treachery and adultery, for the candour and virtue which hitherto reigned here, but which you have banished. Dare to examine yourself, Frederick, and say what a monster could do more ? What ? And is your heart deaf to the voice which cries to you, that you violate hospitality and gratitude ? Dare you look in the face of the venerable man, whom, you ought to shudder at calling father ? Can your hands press his, and thorns not wound them ? In short, did you feel nothing, when

yesterday you saw his eyes bedewed with tears ? . . . Ah ! why could I not have compensated them with my blood ; you were agitated, I was pale and trembling ; he saw all, he knows every thing, it is all over, and the innocent bears the punishment due to the guilty. Wretched Clara ! was it then to imbitter his life, that you vowed to consecrate your days to him ? Perfidious woman ! does it befit you to accuse another, when you are yourself guilty ? Frederick, you were weak, but I am criminal ; it seems as if all nature cries out against, and reproves me ; I neither dare to look at heaven, nor at you, nor at my husband, nor myself. If I would embrace my children, I blush to press them to a heart, from whence innocence is banished ; the objects most dear to me, are those which I repulse with the greatest horror. . . . Thyself Frederick, it is because I love thee, that thou art odious to me ; it is because I have no longer strength to resist thee, that thy presence kills me : and my love only appears to me a crime, because I burn to yield to it. O Frederick ! go hence, if not from duty, let it be from compassion ; the sight of thee is a re-

proach to me, the torment of which I cannot support ; if my life, if virtue is dear to thee, fly without delay ; whatever may be thy resolutions, whatever might be the honour which sustains them, they will not resist opportunity and passion ; remember, Frederick, that an instant may make thee the basest of men, and cause me to die dishonoured, and that, if after having reflected on the horrible abyss that awaits us, it were necessary to repeat to thee again, to fly, thou wouldst be so vile in my eyes, that I should no longer fear thee.

I repeat to you, I am sure that my husband has divined all, and therefore unhappily, I have no longer the suspicions to apprehend, that your departure might occasion. Besides, you know, Eliza's affairs become every day more and more intricate, and render an assistant absolutely indispensable to her : Frederick, be useful to my friend, go and merit from her, pardon for the woes you have occasioned me ; you will find in this cherished woman, another Clara, but without her weaknesses, and without her errors. Shew yourself such to her eyes,

as that she may say, there was only Eliza, or an angel, capable of resisting you ; may your virtues obtain my pardon, and your labours restore me my friend ; may it be you, to whom I may owe her return here, so that every hour, every minute I enjoy her society, may be a benefit which I owe you, and that I may find in you the source of my felicity. Frederick, it depends on you, for me to exult in the tenderness, which I feel, and which I inspire ; elevate yourself by it, above yourself ; may it attach you more firmly to every principle of honour and virtue, that I may fix my eyes on you, whenever I think of perfection. In short, in becoming the greatest, and the best of men, compel my conscience to be silent, that it may suffer my heart to love you without remorse. Oh ! Frederick, if it is true that I am dear to you, learn from me so to cherish our love, that it may be never sullied, by any thing base or contemptible. If you are every thing to me, my universe, my felicity, the divinity whom I adore ; if all nature no longer presents me any object but thy image ; if it is for thee alone that I live, for thee alone that I respire ; if this ef-

fusion of my heart which I can no longer restrain, only shews thee a small portion of the sentiment which misleads me, I am not guilty. Could I prevent its taking rise? Have I power to extinguish it? Does it depend on me to destroy that which a superior power has kindled in my bosom? But because I cannot feel these sentiments for my husband, does it follow thence, that I should not preserve the faith I have plighted him? Dare you say it, Frederick, dare you desire it? The idea of Clara become an object of opprobrium, does it not freeze the current of thy blood, and does not thy love require esteem more than enjoyment? No, no...I know that soul well which has bestowed itself on me, it is because I have known, that I have adored it. I am persuaded that there is no sacrifice beyond your courage, and when I shall have reminded you, that honour exacts that you should go, and that Clara's peace requires it, Frederick will not hesitate.

LETTER XXXI.

FREDERICK TO CLARA.

I have read your letter, and reality, cruel reality, has destroyed the enchanting illusions with which I had lulled myself; the tortures of hell are in my heart, the abyss of despair yawns before me, Clara commands me to precipitate myself into it, I go.

This sacrifice which virtue alone, could never have forced me to make, and which only you could have obtained from me, this sacrifice to which no other can be compared, since there is but one Clara in the universe, and but one heart like mine to adore her; this sacrifice of which I cannot even myself measure the extent, whatever may be the ills it causes me, I swear to you, oh! my Clara! never to attempt the life which is consecrated to thee, which is thine; but if anguish, more potent than fortitude, dries up the sources of my life, and forces me to sink beneath the weight of thy absence, pro-

mise me, Clara, to pardon my death, and not to detest my memory. Be assured that the wretched being who adores you, would have preferred obeying you, in devoting himself to the most endless and unheard of torments, to sinking into the peace of the grave, which you refuse him.

LETTER XXXII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Eliza, he quits me to-morrow, and it is to you I send him ; in casting him upon your friendly bosom, I do not entirely lose him, and in my Eliza, he will find sympathy and consolation. Soothe his anguish, preserve his life, and if it is possible, do yet more, tear me from his heart. Eliza, Eliza, let not the object of my tenderness, be that of your aversion ; why should you despise him, whilst you yet esteem me ? Why hate him, whilst you still love me ? Why should your injustice, rather accuse him than me ? If he has disturbed my peace, have I not embittered his repose ? Are we not equally culpable ? What do I say, am not I much more so ? Does his passion surpass mine ? Am I not secretly devoured by the same desires ? He aspired at the possession of Clara ; ha ! has she not in her heart given herself to him a thousand times ? In short, with what can you reproach him, of which I am innocent ? Our fault is equal Eliza,

but our duties were not so : I was a wife, and a mother, he was without ties ; I knew the world, he was inexperienced ; my fate was fixed, my heart engaged ; he in the morning of life, in the full effervescence of the passions, at nineteen is placed in a delightful solitude, beside a woman who lavishes on him the tenderest friendship, beside a female young and not insensible, and who perhaps preceded him in a guilty passion. I was a wife, and a mother, Eliza, and neither what I owed to my husband, nor my children, neither the respect I owed myself, nor the most sacred duties, nothing restrained me ; I saw Frederick, and forgot them all. When the most solemn engagements did not preserve me from error, can you accuse him of crime for having fallen into it ? When you consider me, more unfortunate than guilty, should not the miserable creature, who was called here to be a victim, and who tears himself away with an excess of fortitude, of which I perhaps, should not be capable, become the object of your tenderest indulgence, and liveliest pity ? Oh ! my Eliza ; receive him into thy bosom ; let thy hand dry up his tears ;

remember that at nineteen he has known of the passions, only the torment they inflict, and the void they leave behind them ; remember, that overwhelmed by this stroke, he would have terminated his existence, if he had not trembled for mine. Remember, Eliza, that you owe him my life. you owe him perhaps more : he respected me, when I no longer respected myself ; he knew how to restrain his transports when I did not blush to yield to mine ; in short, if he were not the noblest of men, your friend would, perhaps, now be the vilest of creatures.

LETTER XXXIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Inexplicable movements of the human heart ! he is gone Eliza, and I did not shed a tear ; he is gone, and it seems as if his departure, had given me new life ; I feel myself under the influence of an unknown power, which obliges me to continual motion ; I cannot stay in one place, nor remain silent, nor sleep ; repose is impossible to me, I feel myself nearer even to gaiety than to calmness. I laughed, joked with my husband, my spirits were singularly high ; I felt I don't know how, I no longer knew myself. If you could see, how far I am from being melancholy ; but neither do I feel that sweet and peaceful satisfaction, which arises from the consciousness of having performed a duty, but something disordered and consuming, which would resemble a fever, if otherwise I were not in perfect health. Would you believe that I have no anxiety to hear of him, and that I am as indifferent to what regards him, as to the rest of the world ?

I assure you, my Eliza, his departure has done me
 the utmost good, I believe myself absolutely cured
 Was it not this morning he left us ? I no
 longer know how time goes : it seems as if all that
 has passed in my soul since yesterday, could not
 have taken place in so short a time : Yet it is
 very true, it was this morning, Frederick tore him-
 self from hence ; I have counted only twelve hours
 since he went ; why then has the clock assumed so
 mournful a sound ? Every time it strikes, I feel an
 involuntary tremor Poor Frederick ! each mo-
 ment removes thee further from me ; each instant,
 as it flies, urges towards the past, that period in
 which I yet beheld thee ; time dissipates, it con-
 sumes it : it is now only a fugitive shadow, which
 I can no longer realise, and the hours of felicity
 which I passed with thee, are already swallowed up
 in void. Overwhelming truth ! Days will succeed
 each other ; general order will not be interrupted,
 and yet thou wilt be far from hence. Light will
 return without thee, and my sad eyes, open on crea-
 tion, will no longer see the being who is to me
 the universe. What a desert, my Eliza ! I lose

myself in a shoreless immensity ; I am oppressed by the tediousness of life, it is in vain that I struggle to escape from myself, I sink beneath the weight of an hour, and to sharpen my woe, thought, like a devouring vulture, intrudes on me, those which are still in reserve.....but why do I tell you all this ? My purpose was different ; I wanted to speak to you of his departure ; what then arrests me ? When I would fix my thoughts upon this subject, a confused instinct repulses it ; it seems, when night surrounds me, and sleep weighs on the universe, that perhaps too, his absence, is but a dream.....but no, I can no longer deceive myself, it is too true, Frederick is gone ; my petrified fingers, remained without motion in his ; my eyes had not a tear to give him, nor my mouth a word to pronounce to him.....I saw his shadow on the wainscot appear, and efface itself forever ; I heard the threshold of the door resound with his last steps, and the noise of the carriage which bore him away, by degrees lose itself in vacancy.....My Eliza, I was obliged to suspend writing my letter ; I suffered from a strange disorder, it is the on-

ly one that continues, and without doubt, I shall recover from it also. I feel an insupportable oppression, my heart swells, I have not room to respire, and air becomes immediately requisite; I went into the garden, already the coolness of night had refreshed me, when I saw a light in M. d'Albe's chamber. I even thought I perceived him through the window, and in the fear that he would attribute to Frederick's departure, the cause which disturbed my repose, I returned immediately to the house; but, alas! my Eliza, I am almost certain, that he not only saw me, but that he knows all that passes in my heart. And yet I had hoped to destroy all suspicion in speaking first of Frederick's going away, and by an exertion to which his interest alone could have made me equal, I did it without confusion or embarrassment. From the first word I thought I perceived a slight expression of joy in his eyes; however he gravely asked me, what motives induced me to approve of this project; I answered that your affairs required assistance, and this being a time of vacation in the manufactory, I thought it was that in which Frederick

might most conveniently absent himself ; that for my part I ardently wished him to go and aid you, that you might be the sooner restored to us. Frederick was present when I began to speak, but he did not say a word ; pale and with downcast eyes, he waited M. d'Albe's reply ; my husband looking steadily at us both, answered : Why should not I go instead of Frederick ? I understand your friend's concerns better than he does, whilst on the contrary he can perfectly well attend to mine ; besides, he directs Adolphus' studies with a zeal which pleases me infinitely, and I have been more than once affected, in seeing him exercise a patience with the child, which proves the warmth of his affection towards his father. These words were like a thunder-bolt to Frederick ; it is dreadful to receive praises from the mouth of a friend whom we betray, and expressions of esteem which the heart disclaims, make us feel more despicable, than even the acknowledgment that we have ceased to merit them. We all remained silent ; my husband expecting an answer, without receiving it, questioned Frederick. . . . What do you decide on, my

friend, said he ; is it for you to stay ; is it for me to go ? Frederick precipitated himself at his feet, and bathed them with his tears : I will go, cried he, in an energetic, and agonised voice, I will go, my Father, and at least for once I shall be worthy of you ! M. d'Albe without appearing to understand these last words, nor ask an explanation of them, tenderly raised him, and pressing him in his arms : go, my son, said he ; do not forget your father, serve the cause of virtue with all your courage, and return here only when the object of your journey is accomplished. Clara, added he, turning towards me, receive his adieus, and the promise I make in his name, never to forget the wife of his father, the dignified mother and friend, to whom affection and respect alike attach him, these are the traits which will engrave you on his soul ; the image of your beauty, may efface itself from his memory, but that of your virtues, will dwell in it forever. My son, continued he, I take upon myself the charge of speaking to you of your friends ; it will be a source of pleasure and amusement to me, which I reserve for myself alone

these words, Eliza, were a prohibition, I too well understand it : When I separate myself from Frederick, no one has a right to question my courage. Ah ! without doubt, this inconceivable effort uplifts me from my weakness, and the more irresistible was the inclination, the more glorious is the triumph ! No, no, my friend, if the heart of Clara was too tender, to be inaccessible to a culpable passion, it is perhaps too great to be suspected of a baseness. . . Why did M. d'Albe appear to be afraid of leaving me alone with Frederick, during the last moments of his stay ? Did he think that I should not know how to make the sacrifice complete ? Did he not see me look with a dry eye at the preparations for his departure ? Has my firmness since forsaken me ? In short, Eliza, would you believe it, I did not feel the want of solitude, nor did I leave M. d'Albe the whole day ; I supported the conversation with an ease, a vivacity, and a volubility, which is unusual with me ; I spoke of Frederick as of any other person ; I played with my children, and all this, Eliza, without effort ; there is only a little confusion in my ideas, and I feel that I often speak without

reflection. I fear that M. d'Albe thought my conduct was constrained, for he did not cease to look at me with sadness and solicitude ; in the evening he put his hand upon my forehead, and finding it burning :—You are not well, Clara, said he, I even think you have fever ; go and repose yourself my child. In truth, said I, I believe I do want sleep. But having caught the glass as I pronounced these words, and perceiving that the uncommon fire of my eyes contradicted what I had just said, and trembling lest M. d'Albe should suspect, that I said what was untrue, for the purpose of escaping from him, I seated myself again. I prefer passing the night here, said I, I feel well only when I am beside you. Clara, resumed he, what you now say, may be truer than you yourself imagine ; I know you well, my child, and I know that there is no peace, and consequently no happiness for you, out of the path of innocence. What do you mean, cried I ? Clara, replied he, you understand me, and I have divined you ; let it content you to know I am satisfied with you, question me no further : at present my friend retire, and if possible, calm

the excessive agitation of your spirits. Then, without adding a word, or embracing me, he left the room. I remained alone : what a void ! what silence ! Fancy every moment presented mournful phantoms to my view ; every object seemed a ghost, every sound a cry of death ; I could not sleep, nor think, nor breathe ; I wandered through the house to escape from myself ; not able to succeed, I took up the pen to write to you ; this letter will at least go where he is, his eyes will see the paper which these hands have touched, he will think that Clara will have traced his name, this will be a tie, this the last thread which will attach us to life and happiness. . . . But alas ! does not heaven command us to break them all ? And this secret pleasure, is it not the last link, that unites me to my weakness ? Ah ! must then my barbarous hands annihilate this also ! must I then cease to think of him, and live a stranger to all that gives life ? Oh ! my Eliza ! when duty binds me to the earth, and commands me to forget Frederick, why cannot I forget also, that it is possible to die ?

LETTER XXXIV.

ELIZA TO M. D'ALBE.

My friend, in uniting herself to you, deprived me of the right of directing her ; I may offer you my advice, but I ought to respect your wishes : you command me to conceal the state of Frederick's mind from her, I will obey you. However, my cousin, if there are disadvantages attending the truth, there are still more in dissimulation ; Clara's example is a proof of this : it teaches us, that whoever adopts wrong means, to accomplish a right end, becomes sooner or later their victim. If from the first instant, she had avowed to you Frederick's passion, this unfortunate creature might have been saved from his cruel destiny ; my virtuous friend would have been free from all weakness, and you would not yourself have been tortured with the agony of a doubt ; and yet where were there ever yet, more plausible, more delicate, or stronger motives than her's for dissimulation ? the happiness of your whole life, seemed to her to be risked by this con-

fession. What other earthly interest, could have induced her to sacrifice truth ? Who will ever know how to estimate what it cost her to deceive you ? . . Ah ! to dissemble, she required all the intrepidity of virtue.

Myself, when she confided me her reasons, I approved them ; I believed she would have had time and fortitude, to have sent away Frederick, before you could have suspected the passion, with which he burned. I yet hoped that Clara's only and constant wish, that of never having been to you during her life, but a source of happiness, would have been accomplished A moment has destroyed all The words escaped from my friend in the delirium of a fever, awakened your suspicions, the condition of Frederick confirmed them, you were even more wretched than you should have been, because you thought you saw in the excessive anguish of Clara, the proof of her ignominy. Her caresses very soon reassured you ; you knew your wife too well to doubt, that she would have repulsed the embraces of her husband, if she had not been worthy to

throw herself on his bosom. I approve of your delicacy in not assisting her in the sacrifice she wished to make, in order that having alone the merit of it, it might reconcile her to herself. But I am far from dreading as you do, the despair of Clara, this state requires strength, and she will direct all hers to the profit of virtue. In representing Frederick to her in his real state I should perhaps give more poignancy to her grief; but in souls like hers, great excitements are necessary to support great resolutions. My cousin, I hazard nothing in shewing you Clara such as she is; she can never lose from being thoroughly known, and there is no weakness for which her angelic virtues would not compensate... I will then venture to tell you, that if I suffer her to suppose she has formed a mistaken opinion of Frederick; that not only he can so easily forget her but that another is on the point of replacing her in his affections; if I represent him, as faithless and volatile, whom she has believed elevated and noble; the contempt which she will conceive for him may deprive her of life, but it is a sense of duty alone which can conquer her love. Confide in herself

to accomplish her cure, no one desires it more ardently ; if she does not succeed, no one could ; and at least if every method fails, reserve to yourself the consolation of having employed none that were unworthy of her.

I do not write to her to day ; I wait your reply, before I speak to her of Frederick.

At length, then, I know this astonishing young man : never did Clara represent him such as he appears to me ; he has the head of Antinous on the form of Apollo, and the beauty of his countenance is not even effaced, by the dark despair which is imprinted on every feature ; he does not speak ; he hardly answers me when I address him ; in short, nothing but the name of Clara, can awaken him from his mournful silence.

The only excuse for this young man, my cousin, is in the excess of his passion : did it not tyrannize over him to such a degree, as to suffer him to have no thought, no reflection, no idea, but such as are cen-

tered in Clara, if the emotions with which she inspires him, did not extinguish even to the sentiments which he owes you, if in loving her, he could recal you to his remembrance, he would no longer be an unfortunate creature whom we should commiserate, but a monster who would deserve execration. You are wrong I think, in not permitting Clara to write to him ; at present, he can listen only to her ; she alone forced him to leave her, she alone can penetrate his soul, recall him to a sense of his duties, and make him blush for the dreadful crime he has committed. My friend, I do not hesitate to declare to you, that preventing all communication between them, you insulate them upon the earth ; no voice can either save or heal them, for no other can reach their hearts. Believe me, in a passion, such as Clara and Frederick are consumed with, other means are necessary, than those that succeed with the world in general ; permit them to deify their love, in rendering it the basis of every virtue ; by degrees truth will destroy illusion, and substitue itself for its shadow.

Frederick arrived yesterday, I had company with me, and made my escape unperceived, to go and receive him : I did not wish him to appear, but desired that he would keep his chamber, because I know, that when the mind is a prey to violent passions, involuntarily gestures, and exclamations can with difficulty be restrained ; but he rejected all my cares. No, said he, in the centre of a crowd as here, I am alone ; where she is not, all is solitude and desolation for me. He accompanied me down stairs ; there was something sinister in his look, and I could not help shuddering as I saw him take his pistols from the carriage ; he guessed my feelings ; fear nothing, said he with a ghastly smile, I gave her my word I would not use them. The rest of the evening he appeared tolerably composed ; however, I kept him constantly in my sight : suddenly I perceived that he turned pale, his head sunk, and in a moment he was covered with blood ; some arteries in his breast, strained by the violence of his anguish, had burst. I immediately sent for assistance, and according to the opinion which has been given me, it is possible that this crisis of na-

ture, in weakening him very much, may contribute to save his life ; I am sure of him, if I can only accomplish touching the chords of his heart ; but how can I hope for this, if a letter from Clara, does not come and cause his tears to flow ? For he can no longer shed them but for her.

My friend, in opening my heart to you on this subject, I have given you the highest proof of esteem which it is possible to confer : such truths could be understood only by a man, so great as to elevate himself above his own passions, in order to enable him to judge of those of others ; so just, as that the liveliest personal interest, should not prejudice his judgement ; so good, as that the injuries he endures, should not harden his heart against those by whom he suffers them, and it belonged only to the husband of Clara to be such a man.

LETTER XXXV.

ELIZA TO M. D'ALBE.

I lament your error, but I submit to it ; may you never repent having so little known how to appreciate your wife, to have supposed that common measures could succeed with her. I have felt the utmost repugnance in deceiving my friend ; it is the first time in my life I ever attempted it ; my heart tells me it is wrong, and its dictates never yet misled me. Believe, nevertheless, that I feel all the strength of your reasoning, and that I am well aware how dangerous it would be to suffer Clara to believe, that to love Frederick, is to love virtue. This pernicious coloring, with which passion embellishes vice, is assuredly the most subtle of poisons, because it insinuates itself into the most upright souls, gains the sensibility on its side, and interests it in all its wanderings. As well as yourself, I condemn the influence of imagination, which, with the assistance of ingenious and delicate sophisms, tempts the mind to view

with a lenient eye, that which robbed of this veil, would make it shrink with horror ; but this unfortunate being, has felt the full extent of her fault, and her heart groans, crushed beneath its weight. Ah ! what can we say to her with which she is not already penetrated ? Who can think her more guilty than she views herself ? oppressed by your goodness and your indulgence, tormented with the dreadful remorse of having embittered your days, she sees with horror all that passes in her soul, and trembles lest you should discover it also ; and do not believe that this horror is caused by the fear of your indignation ; no, she dreads only your sorrow. If she thought only of herself, she would speak ; it would be sweet to her to be punished as she deserves, and the reproaches of an outraged husband, would degrade her less in her own eyes, than an indulgence of which she feels herself unworthy ; but she believes the only way to obliterate her weakness, is in expiating it, in bearing alone, all the weight of the evil she has occasioned you.

Her last letter tells me, that she begins strongly to suspect that you are informed of all which passes in her heart ; but she will break silence only when she is sure of it. Believe me, my friend, anticipate her confidence ; raise her sinking courage ; join to the delicacy which induced you to wait for Frederick's departure until she had herself decided it, the generosity which does not fear, shewing him as interesting as he is ; let her behold you, in short, so great, so magnanimous, that it may be upon you she may be compelled to fix her admiration, and that she may find in this admiration, the talisman which shall guide her back to virtue ; in short, if the councils of my ardent friendship, can shake your resolution, the only artifice you will permit yourself to use with Clara, will be to tell her, that I had suggested to you the idea of deceiving her ; but that the opinion you have formed of her, induced you to reject all low and little measures, that you judge her worthy of hearing every thing as you are of knowing all.

In elevating her thus, you oblige her not to fail without degrading herself ; and in confiding all your thoughts to her, you make her feel that she owes you all hers ; and that she may communicate them to you without blushing, she will accomplish rendering them pure. O my cousin, when our interests are alike, why are our opinions so dissimilar, and why do we not pursue the same means, when our object is the same ?

You will find enclosed in this, the letter which I write to Clara, and in which I speak to her of Frederick in colors so foreign from the truth.... Since his accident he has not left his bed ; on the least movement the blood vessel opens : a slight sensation produces this effect. Yesterday I was beside his bed, when they brought me letters, he distinguished Clara's hand. At the sight of it he uttered a piercing cry, darted forward and seized the paper ; he pressed it to his heart, and in a moment he was covered with blood and tears. A long and alarming weakness succeeded this violent agitation. I wanted to profit by this moment, to take away the

fatal letter ; but by a kind of convulsive movement, he kept it clasped to his breast ; I then saw it was necessary to wait until he regained his senses, before I could recover it ; as soon as he came to himself, his first thought was to return it to me in silence, without asking a single question, but holding my hand as if it were impossible to part with it, and with such a look ! My friend, who has not seen Frederick, can have no idea of expression ; every feature speaks, his eyes are alive with eloquence, if virtue herself descended from Heaven, she could not see him without emotion ; and it was beside a lovely and tender woman, that you placed him ; in the midst of nature, where every thing speaks to the heart, the imagination and the senses. It is there that you leave them *tete-a-tete*, without the means of escaping from themselves. When every thing tended to draw them together, could they remain there with impunity ? it would have been great to have been able to do so, it was madness to risk it, and you should have remembered that all strength employed to combat nature, sooner or later yields. In such a situation, it was only

a woman superior to her sex, it was only a Clara, in short, who would have preserved her purity, but an angel alone, oh! my imprudent friend, could have remained insensible.

In entreating you to have no reserves with Clara, I paint to you only the advantages which would result from candor : but who can tell the baleful consequences of dissimulation, should they discover it? And this will infallibly happen whatever pains we may take to deceive them. Beware of placing truth on their side, and of drawing them together, in making them feel that beyond themselves all is deceit ; beware in short, of committing an error towards Clara, it is not that she would take advantage of it, she has not the right, nor can she have the inclination ; but it is only in exciting in her soul the liveliest gratitude, and the strongest admiration, that you can lead her back to yourself, and conquer the ascendancy which passion has acquired over her.

LETTER XXXVI.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

The whole universe might have told me so, I would have contradicted the universe ! but thou my Eliza, thou wouldst not deceive me, and however changed I may be, I have not yet learned to suspect my friend Frederick is not what he appeared to me. Ardent and impetuous in his sensations, he is light and inconstant in his sentiments ! his imagination may be captivated, his senses excited, but to touch his heart is impossible. It is thus that you have judged, it is thus that you have seen him ; it is Eliza who says it, and it is Frederick of whom she speaks ! Oh ! mortal agony, if this profound, this indissoluble sentiment, which tells me he is virtuous and faithful, that I am deceived and he calumniated ; if this sentiment which has become the sole substance of my soul is real, it is then thou who betrayest me ? Thou, Eliza ! what horrible blasphemy ! thou, my sister, my companion, my friend, thou couldst cease to

be sincere with me ? No, no, in vain I force myself to think it, in vain would I justify Frederick even at the expence of friendship. Outraged virtue stifles the voice of my heart, and forbids me to suspect my Eliza. These terrible words which you have spoken, have resounded through my whole being ; every part of my frame is a prey to anguish, every moment seems to multiply as if to increase my suffering. I know not where to bear my footsteps, where to lay my head ; these dreadful words pursue me, they are every where ; they have withered my heart, and destroyed all my hopes. Alas ! for some days, my passion no longer alarmed me ; to save Frederick I felt courage to overcome it. . . . Already in a distant perspective, I perceived tranquillity succeeding the storm ; already I formed secret plans for an union, which, in rendering him happy, would have permitted his re-union with us ; our pure and heavenly friendship embellished the days of my husband, and our tender cares effaced the transient pain we had occasioned him. How much courage I felt to accomplish such an end ! . . . No effort would have been too great to attain it,

each one would have approached me to Frederick ! But when he has ceased to love, when Frederick is false and frivolous, what have I to overcome ? My tenderness, has it not vanished with the illusion which produced it ? And what should yet remain of it, but the profound and sorrowful repentance of having ever been alive to it ? Oh ! my Eliza, thou canst not know how dreadful it is to be an object of self-contempt ! when I saw in Frederick the most perfect of creatures, I could yet esteem a soul which had erred only for him ; but when I reflect for whom I was guilty, for whom I injured my husband, I feel myself so contemptible, that I cease to hope ever returning to virtue.

Eliza, I renounce Frederick, I renounce thee, and the whole world ; write to me no more, I am no longer worthy of holding an intercourse with thee ; I will no longer bring a blush into thy cheek at the name of friend, which I here give thee for the last time ; leave me to myself ; the universe and all that inhabit it are no longer any thing for me ; mourn thy Clara, her existence has ceased.

LETTER XXXVII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Alas ! my Eliza, you were very prompt in obeying me, and it cost you little to renounce your friend. Your silence tells me too well, that this appellation is no longer fit for me, and yet all unworthy as I am of hearing it, my lacerated soul cleaves to it, nor can it yet resolve to part with it. It is true then Eliza, you also have ceased to love me ? The wretched Clara sees herself fade from the hearts of all those to whom she was dear, and she will exhale her last sigh, without exciting a tear or a regret ! She who but lately was a happy mother, a prudent wife, honored, beloved, by all who surrounded her ; without a thought for which she should blush, satisfied with the past, tranquil about the future, now, despised by her friend, casting down her humbled mein before her husband, not daring to support the looks of any one ; shame follows, it environs her ; it seems as if a dreadful line separated her from the rest of the world, and

placed itself between every being and herself. O torments ! which no pen can paint ! when I would fly from myself, when I would avert my thoughts from my own wretchedness, remorse like a tiger's claw, buries itself in my heart, and tears open all its wounds ; yes, it is impossible not to yield to such bitter griefs, she who would have strength to support, could not feel them ; my blood freezes, my eyes close, and in the oppression which I feel, I know not how to invoke deathbut Eliza ; if my end expiates my fault, and that thy wisdom deigns to melt at the recollection of thy once loved Clara, remember my daughter, it is for her I implore thee ; let not the image of her who gave her life, rob her of thy affection ; take her to thy bosom, and only speak to her of her mother, to tell her that her last sigh was a regret, that she could not live for her sake !

LETTER XXXVIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Forgive me, oh ! my sole consolation ! my friend, my refuge, forgive me, that I could have doubted of your tenderness ! I judged of you not as you are, but according to my deserts ; I thought you just in your serenity, as you appear to me at present, blind in your indulgence. No, my friend, no, she who has brought affliction into her family, and has implanted suspicion in the breast of her husband, no longer merits the name of virtuous, and you call me thus, only because you view me through the medium of your own heart.

Notwithstanding your advice, I have not yet spoken with confidence to my husband ; I have wished it, and more than once have I led to the subject, but he always appears to avoid it ; doubtless, he would blush to hear me ; I ought to spare him the shame of such a confession, and I feel that his silence commands me to conquer my

malady without complaining. Eliza, you may believe me, the reign of love is passed ; but the blow which it has levelled, has struck too violently upon my heart ; I shall never recover it ; these are sorrows which time cannot wear out ; we may become resigned to those which emanate from heaven ; we may bow the head to the decrees of the eternal, and reproach is silenced when it should be addressed to the divinity. But here all tends to render my grief more corroding ; I can accuse no one, all the ills I suffer ebb back to my own heart, for it is there they had their source..... Yet I am calm ; agitation ceases, when all is lost. However, I see with pleasure, that M. d'Able is happy at the species of tranquillity which he sees me enjoy. He availed himself of this state of my spirits to speak to me of the letter in which you announce to him Frederick's unexpected union with Adelaide.... Why did you make a mystery of this my Eliza ? If this charming girl has succeeded in attaching him, do you believe that it will afflict me, do you suppose that I could blame him ? No my friend, I think, on the contrary that Frederick has felt, when

attachment was a crime, inconstancy became a virtue, and he performs in forgetting me, a duty imposed on him alike by honor and by gratitude ; I gave M. d'Albe to understand this, when he entered into the details which you had written him : I saw that he was astonished and delighted with my answer ; his approbation revives me, and the image of his happiness is so sweet to me, that I would still cheerfully fill up the measure of my days, if I did not feel my strength failing, and the cup of life fast retreating from my lips.

LETTER XXXIX.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

No my friend, I am not ill, neither am I melancholy ; my days roll away, and are filled up as formerly : externally I am almost the same, but the excessive weakness of my frame and of my spirits, the profound disgust which withers my soul, teaches me that there are sorrows which it is impossible to resist. Virtue was my first idol, love destroyed it ; love destroyed itself in its turn, and abandons me alone to the world : with it I must expire. Ah ! my Eliza, I suffer much less from the change which has taken place in Frederick, than that I should so wrongly have judged him. You cannot conceive to what an extent my confidence was placed in him : In short, shall I tell you ? For a moment I have thought that my husband and you had agreed to deceive me, and that you joined in painting to me in false and odious colors, the unfortunate being whom my absence destroyed ; fancy represented me, this miserable creature whom I had sent

to thee to repose his sorrows in thy bosom, deceived by thy false tears, and relying on thy truth, whilst thou betrayed him towards thy friend ; in short, my guilty passion shedding its venom, through thy letters, and the conversation of my husband, made me discover numerous traces of deceit. Eliza, do you conceive what that passion must be, which could suffer me to suspect thee ? Ah ! without doubt, this is its greatest trespass !

My friend, the blow which destroys me, is having been deceived in Frederick ; I thought I knew him so well. I felt as if my existence had begun with his, and as if our two souls blending together, were identified on every point ; we may console ourselves for an error of the understanding, but not for a mistake of the heart : mine has too ill guided me, for me to dare to trust to it again, and I ought to perceive with uneasiness, even the emotions with which it yearns towards thee. Oh ! Frederick, my esteem for you was idolatry ; in obliging me to renounce it, you shake my opinion of virtue itself ; the world no longer appears to me but a vast

solitude, and the endearing ties which had supported me in it, but vain and insubstantial shadows, which elude my grasp. Eliza you may speak to me of Frederick ; Frederick is not he whom I have loved ; as a pagan offers worship to the divinity whom he has created, I adored in Frederick the work of my imagination ; truth, or Eliza has rent aside the veil, Frederick is no longer any thing for me ; but as I can hear all with indifference, so I can remain ignorant of all without pain, and perhaps I ought to wish that you should observe silence with regard to him, in order that I may consecrate my last thoughts, entirely to my husband and my children.

LETTER XL.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

I can no more... langour oppresses me, ennui devours me, and disgust embitters my existence ; I suffer, and for my sufferings I could not name a remedy ; the past and the future, truth or illusion, no longer present me any thing agreeable ; existence fatigues me, I would fly from myself, nothing diverts me : pleasures have lost their zest, and duties their importance. I am easy no where : If I walk, weariness obliges me to sit down ; when I would take repose, agitation compels me to exertion. My heart has not room enough ; it suffocates, it palpitates violently ; when I would breathe, deep and heavy sighs escape from my breast.... Where then is the verdure of the trees ? The birds sing no more, does the stream yet murmur ?.... where is the bloom of nature, where the zephyrs that wafted fragrance ? A burning fever rages through my veins, and consumes me ; rare and bitter tears suffuse my eyes, but do not soothe me ;

what shall I do, where bear my sad and wearied footsteps ? I will wander slowly through the country ; there chusing the most lonely spot, I will cull wild flowers, blasted like myself, and emblems of my sadness : I will mingle no green foliage with them ; the verdure of nature has passed away, as hope has expired in my sad heart ! Oh ! God, how existence burthens me ! once friendship embellished it, my days were serene ; a voluptuous melancholy invited me to solitude, and I rejoiced in the beauty and tranquillity of nature ; my children ! you were then ever present to my thoughts ; I think of you now, only to be disturbed by your noise, and tormented by the necessity of watching over you. I would shut you from my sight, I would shut out the whole world, I would forget myself. With the returning day, I feel my woe redoubled. How endless is time when measured by despair ! the sun rises ; it enlivens all nature and animates it with its rays ; I alone, am tired of its lustre, it is odious and exhausting to me ; like a fruit whose core an insect destroys, I bear an invisible ill, a corroding grief. yet,

rapid and lively emotions often strike my senses ; I feel my whole frame shudder ; my eyes become fixed, and it is with the utmost difficulty I can move them. My confused and astonished soul, seeks in vain for the object it would find ; at length more agitated, but enfeebled by the impressions which I have received, I yield entirely, my head droops, I sink, and in my mournful dejection, I no longer contend with the ills that destroy me.

LETTER XLI.

ELIZA TO M. D'ALBE.

Your letter has revived my hopes, my cousin, and I required it ; I should congratulate myself more upon the changes you have observed in Clara, if I did not fear, that deceived by your tenderness, you mistake the total debility of all the organs of life for tranquillity, and the death of the soul for resignation.

I am not at all surprised at the conduct of Clara, which astonishes you ; in it I recognize the woman, whose every thought was a virtue, and every action a model. Her heart feels the want of compensating you, for that which she has involuntarily given to another, and she can be at peace with herself, only in concecrating to you, the life and the strength which remain to her ; you are affected with her constant attentions towards you, and the expression of tenderness which animates them ; you are surprised at her active benevolence which extends

its cares to all around her. Are you ignorant that the soul of Clara was created in a day of jubilee, that it escaped perfect from the hands of nature, and that its essence being *goodness*, it can cease to do good, only in ceasing to exist ?

I shall not attempt to paint to you, the pain her letters give me ; I disclaim with horror the unbounded confidence she has in my truth, which stifling even the voice of her heart, renders me responsible for her life ; she reproaches herself as a *crime*, with having doubted her friend and husband, and this *crime*, it must be acknowledged, we have committed, because it is one to deceive a being like Clara ; her fault was involuntary, ours premeditated ; she views hers with horror, we coldly persist in ours. Animated by the sublimest motive, she can resolve to silence truth. We ! we have sullied it by pitiful artifices, without the certainty of succeeding ; however, I do not reproach myself, and should even Clara's life, be forfeited to the execution of your wishes, in submitting to them, in sacrificing her, to the slightest of your in-

clinations, I only do what she would have prescribed to me, what she would herself have done with transport.

Do not however suppose, that I would now recommend changing your plan ; no, at present it must be completely followed up, and it is no longer time to retract, another shock would exhaust her ; but do not suppose that I can persist in giving her feigned details of the state of Frederick ; no, she having herself felt that reason urged our never mentioning his name, I shall preserve a profound silence on this subject.

Since Frederick has been able to sit up, he has pressed me to give him a minute statement of my affairs ; I eagerly consented, hoping to divert his thoughts ; he quickly comprehended them, and pursues them with unceasing diligence ; but his industry cannot surprise us, it was Clara who requested him to undertake the task.

He yesterday received your letter, in which without speaking directly of your wife, you paint her in every page, as gay and tranquil. I know not what effect this intelligence has produced on him ; he did not speak of it to me. I observe only that his countenance is more gloomy, and his silence more continual : he concentrates all his sensations within himself ; nothing strikes him, nothing reaches his heart, nothing affects him. This morning whilst he was employed in my affairs beside me, I took Clara's picture out of my bosom, and placed it before him ; his first movement was to look at me with surprise, as if to ask me what I meant, and then reverting to the object which was before him, he contemplated it in silence for a long time ; at length returning it to me coldly ; it is not her, said he ; he then remained silent, and returned to his work. Several hours passed, without our exchanging words ; he speaks to me only of my concerns ; if I question him on any other subject than that of Clara, he does not appear to hear me, or he answers me by a sign or a monosyllable : I take all possible precautions to avoid a conversation which might

lead to an entire confidence, for I should not have fortitude to continue deceiving him. Every moment pity tempts me to open my heart to him ; this inclination increases every day, and my courage is not armed against his anguish : I have however, told him nothing yet ; but perhaps, a word from him is only wanting, a momentary overflow of compassion, to rob me of your secret. Ah ! my cousin ! pardon my weakness ; but to see a fellow-creature wretched, to know that a word would soothe him, and yet to remain silent, is an exertion to which I cannot hope to be equal. . . . Ought I even to desire it ? Should I stifle in my soul, that feeling which prompts us to soothe the woes of another ? Ah ! if it is a weakness, I know not what firmness is more laudable ! An hour ago I was with Frederick ; the cries of my child having obliged me to go out hastily, I left a letter on the mantle-piece, which I had just received from Clara. The idea that Frederick might see this letter, made me tremble. And returning quick as lightning, I found it in his hand. Frederick, what have you done, cried I ! nothing but what she

would have permitted me, replied he ! You then have not read that letter, resumed I ! No, she would have despised me, said he, returning it. I would have praised his delicacy, his discretion ; he interrupted me No, Eliza, you are mistaken, I have no longer either delicacy or virtue ; I act, I feel, I exist, only through her, and possibly I should have read that paper, if the fear of displeasing her, had not prevented me. As he ended this phrase, he relapsed into his usual immobility ; what would I not give to see him agitated with lively emotions, to hear him utter piercing cries, in short, to see him yield to the delirium of grief ! how much less alarming would it be, than the state in which he at present is ! concentrating within his own bosom, all the furies of despair, they lacerate, they envenom his heart, and infuse the germs of destruction into his bosom. The unfortunate creature merits your pity, and whatever may have been his ingratitude towards you, his punishment exceeds and expiates his crime.

LETTER XLII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Eliza, I believe that providence has blessed my endeavours, and that he would not withdraw me from the world, until he had rendered me worthy of returning to himself; for some days a salutary calm has diffused itself through my veins, and I smile with satisfaction at my duties; the sight of my husband no longer distresses me, and I participate in the pleasure he feels in being beside me; I see that he is grateful for all the tenderness I shew for him, and that he does justice to its sincerity... His indulgence encourages me, his praises elevate me, and I no longer feel myself contemptible, when I see that he esteems me; but in proportion as my soul acquires strength, my body weakens. I should desire to live for my worthy husband; this is the wish I address to heaven every day, this is the only expiation with which I could atone for my fault: but this hope I must renounce. Death is in my bosom, my Eliza, I feel it undermining my ex-

istence, and its slow and continued progress insensibly leads me to the grave. Oh ! my excellent friend ! weep not my fall, but the cause which occasions it ; had I been permitted to sacrifice my life for thee, for my children, or my husband, death would have constituted my honor and my glory ; but to perish a victim to the perfidy of a man, to die by the hand of Frederick !..... Oh ! Frederick, O remembrance, a thousand times too dear ! Alas ! that name was once for me the image of the noblest candor ; to that name was attached, every idea of great and good ; he alone, appeared to me exempt from the fatal contagion which falsehood has spread over the universe ; he alone presented me that model of perfection, which, in imagination, I had often contemplated, and it is from this pinnacle to which love had raised him that he falls... Frederick, it is impossible so soon to forget such a passion as you pretended to be inspired with, you then but feigned ? The treachery of a common being, appears only a common crime, but Frederick deceitful is a monster : the distance between what thou art, and what thou seemed to be

is immeasurable, there is no crime so black as thine. My greatest torment is much less in renouncing, than being compelled to despise thee, and thy baseness was the only stroke which I could not support.

My friend, this letter is the last in which I shall speak to you of him ; henceforth my thoughts shall be directed towards more worthy objects ; the only means of obtaining the mercy of heaven, is in employing the rest of my days in promoting the happiness of those who surround me ; I visit my hospital every day ; I see with pleasure, that my long absence has not interrupted the order which I had established in it ; I will depute to my Eliza, the care of continuing it ; it is from her that my Laura will learn to superintend it in her turn : may this cherished girl expand under thy guidance to every virtue, in which her mother was deficient ! Speak to her of my faults, but above all, of my repentance ; tell her that if I had listened to thee, I should have lived in peace and honor, and should perhaps have reached thy excellence. May her

tender cares, compensate her aged father, for all the ills I have occasioned him ; and to recompence thee for all that she will owe thee, may she love thee as thy Clara loved thee ! Adieu, my heart sickens at the thoughts of those I love ; it is at the moment of separation from objects so dear, that we feel how much they attach to life . . . Eliza, you will console my worthy husband, you will not leave him insulated on the earth, you will become his friend, as well as the mother of my children ; they will not lose by the exchange.

LETTER XLIII.

CLARA TO ELIZA.

Do not afflict yourself, my friend, the gentle peace which God diffuses over my last moments, is the guarantee of his clemency ; yet a few moments more, and my soul will wing its flight to eternity. In that immortal sanctuary, if there is an involuntary sentiment at the remembrance of which I should blush, perhaps I shall have too bitterly expiated it on earth, to be punished for it in heaven. Each day, prostrate before majesty supreme, I admire his greatness and I implore his bounty ; he encompasses with his beneficence, all who feel, all who suffer, all who breathe ; this is the mantle which the wretched should fold around their heartsbut when night has dropped her sable curtain, fancy paints to me the angel of eternity, with his arms outstretched towards me ; in these moments of perfect calm, the soul bounds towards, “ another and a better world ” and holds converse with its God, whilst conscience, resuming its right,

weighs the past and foresees the future. It is then that casting a glance on the days swallowed up by time, we ask ourselves, not without dread, how they have been employed, and in taking a retrospect of life, we know the witnesses who will appear for or against us. What an awful reckoning ! who will dare to give this account without the most profound humility, without the keenest repentance for all the errors into which they have been led ! Oh ! Frederick how will you support the tremendous moment ? Had you even, innocent of deceit, believed you felt all you expressed for me, remember, wretched youth, that to absolve you of ingratitude towards your Father, heaven itself must have illumined the flames, you have feigned and that these are never extinguished. And thou, my Eliza, forgive me, that the remembrance of Frederick yet mingles with my last thoughts ; the absolute silence you maintain on this subject, sufficiently tells me that I should imitate it ; but before I leave this earth, which Frederick still inhabits, ah ! let me address him a last adieu, let me say to him that I forgive him. If he yet retain

any traces of resemblance to the being whom I so fondly loved, the idea of having occasioned my death, will accelerate his own, and perhaps the period which shall unite us in the realms of bliss, may not be very far distant. Ah ! if it is only there that I should again behold him ! am I guilty in sighing for that moment ?

LETTER XLIV.

ELIZA TO M. D'ALBE.

It is then true, my friend declines, and you are alarmed at her condition ! these long and frequent faintings, are an alarming symptom, and an impediment to your wish of procuring her a change of air ? Ah ! certainly I will hasten to her, I will leave my two sons under Frederick's care, this is a chain by which he will be confined here ; I dissemble my sorrow before him, because, could he suspect the motive of my journey, could he suspect that all you have told him of Clara was but to mislead him ; if he saw those dreadful words which you could not trace without shuddering, and that I read with despair, *already the shadow of death, is cast over her features* ; no human strength would detain him.

No, my friend, no, I do not reproach you ; I do not even reproach the author of all these disasters. When a fellow-creature is the victim of mis-

fortune, he becomes sacred to me, and Frederick is in too dreadful a state, for the bitterness of my anguish to be turned against him. But my soul is borne down with sadness, and I have no expressions to render what I feel. Clara was the light, the glory, the delight of my life ; if I lose her, all the ties that I have left become odious to me ; my children, yes, even my children, will be henceforth but a heavy charge ; every day in embracing them, I shall recollect that it is they who prevent me from joining her ; in my deep affliction, I reject their caresses, and the delights which they promised me, and all the ties that attached me to the world ; my despairing heart refuses all pleasures in which Clara cannot participate.

Ah ! believe me, suffer her to perform all her religious exercises, it is not them which will weaken her ; impassioned souls, like hers, require aliment, and seek their resources either in religious or sensible ideas ; whilst the dreadful void which love leaves behind it, can be filled up only by God himself.

Announce me to Clara, I expect to set off in two or three days. Rely upon me, I shall know how to respect your wishes, my word, and the condition of my friend ; she shall be ever ignorant, that her husband ceased for a moment to appreciate her character and treated her like an ordinary woman.

LETTER XLV.

ELIZA TO M. D'ALBE.

Oh ! my Cousin ! Frederick is gone, and I am sure it is to your house, he has fled ; I tremble lest this letter which I send express, should arrive too late, and should not prevent the dreadful evils which an explanation may produce....how shall I describe the scene which has just passed ? To day for the first time, Frederick accompanied me to a strange house : Absent, and mute, his attention was fixed on no object, he seemed not to enter into any thing that passed around him, and hardly answered the questions which might be addressed to him. Suddenly a stranger pronounced the name of Madame d'Albe, he said that he had just come from her house and that she was ill, very ill..... Frederick cast a haggard and enquiring eye on me, and seeing tears in my eyes, he no longer doubted his misfortune. He then approached the man and questioned him. In vain, I called him, in vain I implored him to come to me, and promised I

would tell him all, he repulsed me with violence, exclaiming, no, you have deceived me, I will believe you no more. The man who had just spoken, and had been to your house only on business, relative to your manufactory, confounded at the unexpected effect of what he had said, hesitated whether or not to reply to Frederick's question. . . . However, alarmed at the terrible accents of this young man, he did not dare to resist him. I can only tell you, said he, that report says, Madame d'Albe is dying, in consequence of the infidelity of a young man whom she loved, and whom her husband banished from his family. At these words, Frederick uttered a piercing cry, overthrew every thing which was in his way, and darted out of the room ; I flew after him, I called him, I conjured him in the name of Clara to hear me, he refused to listen to me : no force could detain him, I lost sight of him and have not seen him yet, nor do I know what is become of him ; but I cannot doubt but that he has gone to Clara ; I tremble lest she should see him ; the surprise, the emotion it must occasion her, will exhaust her remaining strength.

O my friend ! may my letter arrive in time, to prevent such a misfortune. Insensate mad man ! in his ferocious delirium, he will forget that his sudden appearance, may kill her whom he loves. Ah ! if possible prevent him from seeing her, drive him from your doors, let him no longer find in you, the indulgent father who seeks to justify his crime, but overwhelm him with your indignation, and the reproaches of insulted honor ; what signifies his fury, his imprecations, even his agony ? Remember he is the murderer of Clara, that it is he who has disturbed her celestial soul, and tarnished her unblemished reputation, for in fact, the words of this man, are the faithful echo of the public voice ! this barbarous world, odious and unjust, has dishonoured my friend : without regard to what she was, they have rigorously judged her according to false appearances, nor have distinguished the tender though irreproachable woman, from the vile adulteress. And though my Clara should acquire strength, to conquer her passion, could she withstand the loss of public esteem ? She who has always respected it, who has always considered it the indispen-

sable ornament of her sex, could she live after having lost it? No, Clara, die, quit a world which never knew how to estimate thee; go, ask of heaven the reward of thy sufferings, and may kindred angels press around thee, and conduct thy wearied spirit to everlasting peace.

[Here end the letters of Clara; the rest is a recital written by the hand of Eliza; she certainly learned the principal circumstances from the mouth of her friend, and she confided them to paper, that the young Laura, one day perusing them, might learn to guard against the passions to which her unfortunate mother had fallen a victim.]

IT was late, night already began to hang her veil over the universe, Clara, weak and languishing, had herself conveyed to the bottom of the garden,

beneath the shade of the poplars which covered her fathers urn, and where her piety had consecrated an altar to the divinity.

Humbly prostrate on the last step, her heart still consumed with the image of Frederick, she implored the clemency of heaven towards a being so dear, and strength to forget him. Suddenly a hurried step roused her from her meditations, she was surprised at being interrupted, and turning her head, the first object which struck her sight, was Frederick, Frederick pale, terror-struck, breathless and covered with dust. At this sight, she fancied she was dreaming, and remained motionless, as if dreading that a single moment should dissolve the vision. Frederick saw her, and stopped ; he contemplates this charming face, which but a little while ago, he had left bright in youthful bloom ; he finds it faded and melancholy ; it was no longer but the shade of Clara, whilst the hand of death was marked in every feature ; he would speak to her and cannot articulate a word, the violence of his anguish suspends animation, Clara still im-

moveable, with her arms stretched towards him, pronounces the name of Frederick : at the sound of this voice, he recovers life and motion, and seizing her discolored hand :—No, cried he, thou didst not believe that Frederick had ceased to love thee, no ; thy heart refused to credit, this horrible, this dreadful blasphemy. Oh ! my Clara, in quitting thee, in renouncing thee forever, in supporting life in obedience to thy commands, I believed I had exhausted the bitter cup of misfortune ; but if thou hast doubted of my faith, I have tasted only its smallest portion Speak then, Clara, reassure me, break this mortal silence which freezes me with horror . . . In saying these words he pressed her ardently to his bosom. Clara gently repulsing him, raises herself, fixes her eyes upon him, and gazing at him a long time with surprise :—O thou, said she, who presents to me the image of him I have so fondly loved, art thou the shade of that Frederick who was my divinity ! say, dost thou descend from thy celestial habitation, to tell me that my last hour approaches ? Art thou the angel destined to guide me to eternity ? What do I hear, cried

Frederick, is it thou who knowest me not ? Clara, is thy heart then altered like thy features, and does it remain insensible beside me ? They told me I had lost it, can friendship have deceived me ? Yes, exclaimed he vehemently, black treachery made me appear faithless in thine eyes, and painted thee to me, gay and tranquil ; they would have made us die, the victims of each other, they would have had us mutually plunge the dagger in each others hearts. Believe me, Clara, friendship, faith, honor, all is false in the world ; there is no truth but in love, there is nothing real, but this powerful and indestructible sentiment which binds me to thy being, and which in this moment, governs thee as well as myself : combat it no longer, oh ! my Clara ! yield to thy lover ; participate his transports, let us live, let us die but for each other ! Frederick spoke, he presses her in his arms, he covers her with kisses, he lavishes on her the most ardent caresses ; the unfortunate creature, overpowered by so many emotions, palpitating, oppressed, half vanquished by her heart, and her weakness, till resists, and repulsing him, exclaims :—Frede-

rick, when eternity is just open to receive me, wouldst thou that I should appear dishonored before the tribunal of my God ! Frederick, it is for thy sake I implore thee, the responsibility of my crime will devolve upon thy head Well, I accept it, cried he, in a dreadful voice, there is no price at which I would not purchase the possession of Clara !!! Love doubled the strength of Frederick, love and illness had exhausted that of Clara She is no longer herself ; Frederick is all, Frederick ! Clara should have died, but Clara was guilty and punishment awaited returning sense. Punishment ! how dreadful ! what a gulph presented itself before her ; she had violated conjugal faith ! she had sullied the honor of her husband ! the noble Clara, was no longer, but an infamous adultress ! Years of unspotted virtue, were effaced by this single moment ! She sees it, and has no tears for her misfortune ; the consciousness of her crime maddens her ; she is no longer the soft and tender female, whose touching accents subdued the soul of every being of sensibility, and created one in the indifferent ; but fran-

tic, wild and furious, she can neither dissemble her perfidy to herself, nor endure the idea of it. She retreats from Frederick with horror, and raising her trembling hands towards heaven :—Eternal justice ! cried she, if thou hast any pity left, for the vile creature who yet implores thee, punish the base artizan of my infamy ; that wandering, insulated on the earth, he may be ever pursued by the ignominy of Clara, and the cries of his benefactor. . . . And thou perfidious and cruel man, contemplate thy victim, but listen to the last vows of her heart ; this heart detests, more than it ever loved thee ; thy approach tortures her, the sight of thee is her greatest punishment ; go, go hence, contaminate me not, with thy unworthy looks. Frederick, inflamed with love and devoured with remorse, would soften Clara ; prostrate at her feet, he implores, he conjures her, she will not hear him ; the sense of crime has extinguished love, and the voice of Frederick no longer reaches her heart. He makes a movement to approach her ; terrified she darts to the altar, and encircling it with her arms, she exclaims : will thy sacrilegious hand, dare to reach

me even here ? If thy base soul has not known how to respect all that was most holy on earth, at least respect heaven, and do not impiously insult me, even in this last asylum. It is here, added she, in a prophetic transport, that this moment in which I see thee, is the last in which my eyes shall open to behold thee ; if thou wilt not go from hence, I shall know how to find a speedy death, and may heaven annihilate me, the first instant, thou shalt dare to appear before me.

Frederick, staggered by this horrible imprecation, and trembling lest the least delay should put an end to his Clara, moved away impetuously. But hardly was he out of her sight, when he stopped, he cannot leave the wood, without having once more heard her, and raising his voice, he exclaimed : Oh ! thou, whom I must never more behold ! thou who unitest with heaven, in cursing the wretch who adored thee ! thou who in recompence of unexampled love, condemns him to eternal exile ! thou, in short, whose hate has proscribed him from the whole surface of the earth. Oh ! Clara,

before immensity is between us forever, let me once more hear the sound of that voice, and in the name of the torments I endure, let it be in the accents of pity. . . . he listens, he does not draw a breath, he stifles the horrible beatings of his heart, that he may listen, to the voice of Clara. At length these feble and tremulous words, which hardly pierce the universal stillness of nature, salute his ear, and calm his senses : *Go, unhappy mortal, I forgive thee.*

Indignation had rallied Clara's strength, tenderness overcame it ; subdued by Frederick's ascendancy, she felt that at the moment she pardoned him, he was still dear to her, and fell lifeless on the steps of the altar.

M. d'Albe who had not received Eliza's letter, and who had been out for some hours, learned on his return, that Frederick had been seen in the house ; he trembled and asked for his wife ; they told him that she was gone according to her usual practice, to her father's tomb. He bent his steps

towards it, the moon reflected a feeble light, he called Clara, she did not answer ; his first thought was that she had fled with Frederick ; the second more just, but yet more dreadful, that she had ceased to exist. He hastens to the place, at length, by the light of the silvery rays, which dart through the trembling poplars, he perceives an object.....a white gown.....he approaches, it was Clara stretched upon the marble, and cold as the bed she pressed. At this sight he uttered a piercing cry ; his servants heard and ran to him. Ah ! how describe the universal consternation ! this celestial woman is no more, this adored mistress, this angel of beneficence is now only cold and mouldering clay ! despair took possession of every heart ; however, a movement revives hope, they bear her to the house, and fly for assistance on every side. The whole night past in uncertainty, but the next day a glow of warmth returns to her almost exhausted frame, and she opens her eyes, at the moment that Eliza reaches her bed-side.

This tender friend had immediately followed her letter, but the letter had not arrived : a word from M. d'Albe informs her of all, she enters the room in dismay. Clara knows her, and holds out her arms to her ; Eliza throws herself into them, and Clara presses her to her heart, already struck with the chill of death. She hopes that friendship will revive her, and lend her strength to express her last wishes ; her dying eye seeks her husband ; her expiring voice calls him, she takes his hand and uniting it with that of her friend, she looks mournfully at them both, and says : Heaven would not permit me to die innocent, the wretch who you see before you, is covered with the last degree of opprobrium, my senses betrayed me, and an ungrateful creature profiting by my weakness, has broken the sacred ties which attached me to my husband. I do not ask indulgence, neither he nor I have the smallest claim to it ; these are crimes which no passion can excuse, and which pardon cannot reach She was silent, in listening to her the heart of Eliza closed against hope, and she was convinced that her friend would not survive her shame.

M. d'Albe, in consternation at what he hears, yet does not repulse the hand which has betrayed him. Clara, said he, your error is certainly great, but you have still virtues enough left to constitute my felicity, and the only fault I cannot forgive you, is your wishing for death, which will leave me alone in the world. At these words, his wife cast an eye of gratitude and tenderness towards him :—Dear and respected friend, said she, believe that it is for you only I would wish to live, and that it is dying unworthy of you, which renders my last moments so bitter. But I feel my strength diminishing, I entreat you both to leave me, I wish to collect my scattered thoughts, before I speak to you again.

Eliza softly closed the curtain, and did not utter a word : she had nothing to say, nothing to ask, nothing to expect : the confession of her friend taught her that all was over, that the decree of death was irrevocable, and that Clara was lost forever.

M. d'Albe who did not know her so well, was agitated and uneasy ; more happy than Eliza, he fears, because he hopes ; he is astonished at her tranquillity, her mute consternation appears to him indifference, and irritates him. Eliza, without being disturbed by his anger, rises gently, and leads him out of the chamber : for heavens sake, cried she, disturb not the solemnity of her last moments by vain assistance which cannot save her, and calm an irritation which may break the last thread of her existence. Tremble lest life should be extinguished before she can have spoken to you of her children : without doubt her last wishes will be consecrated to them ; whatever they may be, should they even be to survive her, I swear to fulfil them. As for her terrestrial existence, it is over ; from the moment that Clara was guilty, she necessarily renounced life ; I love her too much to wish her to survive, and I know her too well to hope it. The positive and imposing air with which Eliza pronounced these words, was a thunder-bolt to M. d'Albe, he learned that his wife was no more. . . . Eliza approached the bed of her friend : motionless

and silent, she seemed to await her last breath, to exhale her own.

After some hours, Clara held out her hand, and taking that of Eliza ; I feel said she that I am expiring, I must hasten to speak ; send every one out of the room, and let you and M. d'Albe alone, remain with me. Eliza made a sign, every one retired ; the miserable husband advanced, without having courage to cast his eyes upon her he was about to lose ; he internally reproached himself with having been the cause of her death, in deceiving her ; Clara divined his repentance, and believed that her friend partook of it ; she hastened to reassure them.—Reproach not yourselves, said she, with having dissembled the truth to me ; your motive was good, and this method only, could have succeeded ; doubtless, it would have cured me, if the dreadful fatality which pursues me, had not frustrated all your projects. Eliza did not reply ; she knew that Clara only said this, to calm their agitated consciences, and she would not disclaim a fault, which would devolve solely on M.

d'Albé ; but he accused himself, he rendered Eliza the justice which was due to her, in telling Clara, that she had only yielded to his wishes. She was rewarded for her integrity ; a slight pressure of the hand, which M. d'Albe did not perceive, recompensed her without punishing him. Clara continued O my friend ! said she, looking tenderly at her husband, I alone am guilty ; you, who sought only my happiness, and whom I have so ungratefully recompensed ; is it for you to repent ? M. d'Albe took his wife's hand, and covered it with his tears ; weep not, said she, my friend, it is not now that you lose me ; but when by a shameful weakness I authorised Frederick's love ; when misled by specious reasoning, I wanted confidence in you, for the first time in my life, it was then I ceased to be myself, I ceased to live for you ; from the moment which I stepped aside from my principles, the sacred chain which united us was broken ; seduction insinuated itself into my soul, fascinated my eyes, and took possession of my senses ; instead of tearing myself from the allurements which misled me, I excused it, and from that moment, my fall was

inevitable. O thou! my Eliza, continued she, with a more elevated accent, thou who art about to become the mother of my children, I do not speak to thee of my son; he will have the example of his father: but watch over my Laura; let her interest prevail over thy friendship. If any virtues have shed lustre on my life, tell her that my guilt effaced them all; in speaking to her of the crime that caused my death, beware of palliating or excusing it, for then you will interest her in my weakness; let her know that I was lost, by lending to vice, the coloring of virtue; tell her that when we suffer ourselves to make innocence the veil of its most hideous enemy, we are deceived, betrayed, and fall into the snares of vice, when we believe that it is virtue only, we cherish.... in short, Eliza, added she. (whilst expiring life just hovered on her lips) say often to my Laura, that if a severe and courageous hand, had rent aside the charm with which I encircled my passion, if it had been plainly shewn me, that she who compromises with honor is already lost, and that nothing noble ever resulted from a vicious cause, then with-

out doubt, I should have spurned the sentiment, which now destroys me.....Here Clara was compelled to interrupt herself, in vain she sought to finish the sentence, her ideas became disordered, and her icy lips could only repeat a few broken words.....after some minutes she asked her husband's blessing ; on receiving it, a flash of joy beamed in her languid eye....now, I die in peace said she, I may appear before my Maker....I have offended you more than him, he will not be less merciful. Then casting a last look on her friend and pressing her hand, she pronounced the name of Frederick, sighed, and died. Some days after, M. d'Albe received this note written by Eliza and dictated by Clara.

CLARA TO M. D'ALBE.

I will not call a blush, into the venerable cheek of my husband, by pronouncing before him the name of one, whom perhaps, he detests ; but can he forget that this unfortunate being would have fled this asylum, and that my commands alone retained

him ; that in our mutual situation, his duties being less, so also was his fault less than mine, and that my love was a crime, whilst his was but a weakness. He is now wandering on the earth, he has your misfortunes to reproach himself with, he will believe he is the cause of my death, and his heart was formed for the love of virtue. Oh ! my friend, my inestimable friend ! does pity whisper you nothing in his behalf, and will he not obtain that mercy which you have not refused me ?

To comply with the last wishes of his wife, M. d'Albe sought for Frederick all around the neighborhood, and had the most exact enquiries made, in the place of his birth ; all were useless ; and his researches entirely unsuccessful ; no one ever discovered where he had dragged out his miserable existence, nor when he had terminated it. No human being ever knew what had become of him ; it was only said that at Clara's funeral, a stranger wrapped up in a thick great-coat, with a large hat over his face, had silently followed the procession, and that at the moment the coffin was laid in the

earth, he shuddered and fell to the ground, and that as soon as the grave was filled up, he started off impetuously ; exclaiming :—At present I am free, thou shalt not be there long alone.



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